

Excerpts from the  
***Orthodox Church***

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**Part I: History.**

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**Contents:**

Introduction. The Beginnings. Byzantium: The Church of the Seven Councils. The Great Schism. The conversion of the Slavs. The Church under Islam. Moscow and St. Petersburg. The twentieth century: Greeks and Arabs. The twentieth century: Diaspora and mission.

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**Introduction**

**O**rthodoxy is not just a kind of Roman Catholicism without the Pope, but something quite distinct from any religious system in the west. Yet those who look more closely at this “unknown world” will discover much in it which, while different, is yet curiously familiar. “But that is what I have always believed!” Such has been the reaction of many, on learning more fully about the Orthodox Church and what it teaches; and they are partly right. For more than nine hundred years the Greek East and the Latin West have been growing steadily apart, each following its own way, yet in the early centuries of Christendom both sides can find common ground. Athanasius and Basil lived in the east, but they belong also to the west; and Orthodox who live in France, Britain, or Ireland can in their turn look upon the national saints of these lands — Alban and Patrick, Cuthbert and Bede, Geneviève of Paris and Augustine of Canterbury — not as strangers but as members of their own Church. All Europe was once as much part of Orthodoxy as Greece and Christian Russia are today.

Robert Curzon, traveling through the Levant in the 1830s in search of manuscripts which he could buy at bargain prices, was disconcerted to find that the Patriarch of Constantinople had never heard of the Archbishop of Canterbury. Matters have certainly changed since then. Travel has become incomparably easier; the physical barriers have been broken down. And travel is no longer necessary: a citizen of western Europe or America need no longer leave his own country in order to observe the Orthodox Church at first hand. Greeks journeying westward from choice or economic necessity, and Slavs driven westward by persecution, have brought their Church with them, establishing across all Europe and America a network of dioceses and parishes, theological colleges and monasteries. Most important of all, in many different communions during

the present century there has grown up a compelling and unprecedented desire for the visible unity of all Christians, and this has given rise to a new interest in the Orthodox Church. The Greco-Russian diaspora was scattered over the world at the very moment when western Christians, in their concern for reunion, were becoming conscious of the relevance of Orthodoxy, and anxious to learn more about it. In reunion discussions the contribution of the Orthodox Church has often proved unexpectedly illuminating: precisely because the Orthodox have a different background from the west, they have been able to open up fresh lines of thought, and to suggest long-forgotten solutions to old difficulties.

The west has never lacked men whose conception of Christendom was not restricted to Canterbury, Geneva, and Rome; yet in the past such men were voices crying in the wilderness. It is now no longer so. The effects of an alienation which has lasted for more than nine centuries cannot be quickly undone, but at least a beginning has been made.

What is meant by "the Orthodox Church"? The divisions which have brought about the present fragmentation of Christendom occurred in three main stages, at intervals of roughly five hundred years. The first stage in the separation came in the fifth and sixth centuries, when the "Lesser" or "Separated" eastern Churches became divided from the main body of Christians. These Churches fall into two groups, the Nestorian Church of Persia, and the five Monophysite Churches of Armenia, Syria (the so-called "Jacobite" Church), Egypt (the Coptic Church), Ethiopia, and India. The Nestorians and Monophysites passed out of western consciousness even more completely than the Orthodox Church was later to do. When Rabban Sauma, a Nestorian monk from Peking, visited the west in 1288 (he traveled as far as Bordeaux, where he gave communion to King Edward I of England), he discussed theology with the Pope and Cardinals at Rome, yet they never seem to have realized that from their point of view he was a heretic. As a result of this first division, Orthodoxy became restricted on its eastward side mainly to the Greek-speaking world. Then came the second separation, conventionally dated to the year 1054. The main body of Christians now became divided into two communions: in western Europe, the Roman Catholic Church under the Pope of Rome; in the Byzantine Empire, the Orthodox Church of the East. Orthodoxy was now limited on its westward side as well. The third separation, between Rome and the Reformers in the sixteenth century, is not here our direct concern.

It is interesting to note how cultural and ecclesiastical divisions coincide. Christianity, while universal in its mission, has tended in practice to be associated with three cultures: the Semitic, the Greek, and the Latin. As a result of the first separation the Semitic Christians of Syria, with their flourishing school of theologians and writers, were cut off from the rest of Christendom. Then followed the second separation, which drove a wedge between the Greek and the Latin traditions in Christianity. So it has come about that in Orthodoxy the primary cultural influence has been that of Greece. Yet it must not therefore be thought that the Orthodox Church is exclusively a Greek Church and nothing else, since Syriac and Latin Fathers also have a place in the fullness of Orthodox tradition.

While the Orthodox Church became bounded first on the eastern and then on the western side, it expanded to the north. In 863 Saint Cyril and Saint Methodius, the Apostles of the Slavs, traveled northward to undertake missionary work beyond the frontiers of the Byzantine Empire, and their efforts led eventually to the conversion of Bulgaria, Serbia, and Russia. As the Byzantine power dwindled, these newer Churches of the north increased in importance, and on the fall of Constantinople to the Turks in 1453 the Principality of Moscow was ready to take Byzantium's place as the protector of the Orthodox world. Within the last 150 years there has been a partial reversal of the situation. Although Constantinople itself still remains in Turkish hands, a

pale shadow of its former glory, the Church in Greece is free once more; but Russia and the other Slavonic peoples have passed in their turn under the rule of a non-Christian government.

Such are the main stages which have determined the external development of the Orthodox Church. Geographically its primary area of distribution lies in eastern Europe, in Russia, and along the coasts of the eastern Mediterranean. It is composed at present of the following self-governing or “autocephalous” Churches (After each Church an approximate estimate of size is given. Like all ecclesiastical statistics, these figures are to be treated with caution, and they are in any case intended merely as a rough comparative guide. For many Orthodox Churches, particularly those in communist countries, no up-to-date statistics are available. For the most part the figures indicate nominal rather than active membership):

The four ancient Patriarchates: Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem. Though greatly reduced in size, these four Churches for historical reasons occupy a special position in the Orthodox Church, and rank first in honor. The heads of these four Churches bear the title *Patriarch*.

Eleven other autocephalous Churches: Russia, Romania, Serbia (in Yugoslavia), Bulgaria, Georgia, Cyprus, Poland, Albania, Czechoslovakia and Sinai.

All except three of these Churches — Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Albania — are in countries where the Christian population is entirely or predominantly Orthodox. The Churches of Greece, Cyprus, and Sinai are Greek; five of the others — Russia, Serbia, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Poland — are Slavonic. The heads of the Russian, Romanian, Serbian, and Bulgarian Churches are known by the title *Patriarch*; the head of the Georgian Church is called *Catholicos-Patriarch*; the heads of the other churches are called either *Archbishop* or *Metropolitan*.

There are in addition several Churches which, while self-governing in most respects, have not yet attained full independence. These are termed “autonomous” but not “autocephalous”: Finland, Japan and China.

There are ecclesiastical provinces in western Europe, in North and South America, and in Australia, which depend on the different Patriarchates and autocephalous Churches. In some areas this Orthodox “diaspora” is slowly achieving self-government. In particular, steps have been taken to form an autocephalous Orthodox Church in America, but this has not yet been officially recognized by the majority of other Orthodox Churches.

The Orthodox Church is thus a family of self-governing Churches. It is held together, not by a centralized organization, not by a single prelate wielding absolute power over the whole body, but by the double bond of unity in the faith and communion in the sacraments. Each Church, while independent, is in full agreement with the rest on all matters of doctrine, and between them all there is full sacramental communion. (Certain divisions exist among the Russian Orthodox, but the situation here is altogether exceptional and, one hopes, temporary in character). There is in Orthodoxy no one with an equivalent position to the Pope in the Roman Catholic Church. The Patriarch of Constantinople is known as the “Ecumenical” (or universal) Patriarch, and since the schism between east and west he has enjoyed a position of special honor among all the Orthodox communities; but he does not have the right to interfere in the internal affairs of other Churches. His place resembles that of the Archbishop of Canterbury in the worldwide Anglican communion.

This decentralized system of independent local Churches has the advantage of being highly flexible, and is easily adapted to changing conditions. Local Churches can be created, suppressed, and then restored again, with very little disturbance to the life of the Church as a whole. Many of these local Churches are also national Churches, for during the past in Orthodox countries Church and State have usually been closely linked. But while an independent State often possesses its own autocephalous Church, ecclesiastical divisions do not necessarily coincide with State boundaries. Georgia, for instance, lies within the U.S.S.R., but is not part of the Russian Church, while the territories of the four ancient Patriarchates fall politically in several different countries. The Orthodox Church is a federation of local, but not in every case *national*, Churches. It does not have as its basis the political principle of the State Church.

Among the various Churches there is, as can be seen, an enormous variation in size, with Russia at one extreme and Sinai at the other. The different Churches also vary in age, some dating back to Apostolic times, while others are less than a generation old. The Church of Czechoslovakia, for example, only became autocephalous in 1951.

Such are the Churches which make up the Orthodox communion as it is today. They are known collectively by various titles. Sometimes they are called the *Greek* or *Greco-Russian Church*; but this is incorrect, since there are many millions of Orthodox who are neither Greek nor Russian. Orthodox themselves often call their Church the *Eastern Orthodox Church*, the *Orthodox Catholic Church*, the *Orthodox Catholic Church of the East*, or the like. These titles must not be misunderstood, for while Orthodoxy considers itself to be the true Catholic Church, it is not part of the *Roman Catholic Church*; and although Orthodoxy calls itself eastern, it is not something limited to eastern people. Another name often employed is the *Holy Orthodox Church*. Perhaps it is least misleading and most convenient to use the shortest title: the *Orthodox Church*.

Orthodoxy claims to be universal — not something exotic and oriental, but simple Christianity. Because of human failings and the accidents of history, the Orthodox Church has been largely restricted in the past to certain geographical areas. Yet to the Orthodox themselves their Church is something more than a group of local bodies. The word “Orthodoxy” has the double meaning of “right belief” and “right glory” (or “right worship”). The Orthodox, therefore, make what may seem at first a surprising claim: they regard their Church as the Church which guards and teaches the true belief about God and which glorifies Him with right worship, that is, as nothing less than the Church of Christ on earth. How this claim is understood, and what the Orthodox think of other Christians who do not belong to their Church, it is part of the aim of this book to explain.

## The Beginnings

**I**n the village there is a chapel dug deep beneath the earth, its entrance carefully camouflaged. When a secret priest visits the village, it is here that he celebrates the Liturgy and the other services. If the villagers for once believe themselves safe from police observation, the whole population gathers in the chapel, except for the guards who remain outside to give warning if strangers appear. At other times services take place in shifts....

The Easter service was held in an apartment of an official State institution. Entrance was possible only with a special pass, which I obtained for myself and for my small daughter. About thirty people were present, among them some of my acquaintances. An old priest celebrated the

service, which I shall never forget. “Christ is risen” we sang softly, but full of joy.... The joy that I felt in this service of the Catacomb Church gives me strength to live, even today.

These are two accounts (Taken from the periodical *Orthodox Life* [Jordanville, N.Y.], 1959, no. 4, pp. 30-31) of Church life in Russia shortly before the Second World War. But if a few alterations were made, they could easily be taken for descriptions of Christian worship under Nero or Diocletian. They illustrate the way in which during the course of nineteen centuries Christian history has traveled through a full circle. Christians today stand far closer to the early Church than their grandparents did. Christianity began as the religion of a small minority existing in a predominantly non-Christian society, and such it is becoming once more. The Christian Church in its early days was distinct and separate from the State; and now in one country after another the traditional alliance between Church and State is coming to an end. Christianity was at first a *religio illicita*, a religion forbidden and persecuted by the government; today persecution is no longer a fact of the past alone, and it is by no means impossible that in the thirty years between 1918 and 1948 more Christians died for their faith than in the three hundred years that followed Christ’s Crucifixion.

Members of the Orthodox Church in particular have been made very much aware of these facts, for the vast majority of them live at present in communist countries, under anti-Christian governments. The first period of Christian history, extending from the day of Pentecost to the conversion of Constantine, has a special relevance for contemporary Orthodoxy.

*“Suddenly there came from heaven a sound like the rushing of a violent wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues like flames of fire, divided among them and resting on each one. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit”* (Acts 2:2-4). So the history of the Christian Church begins, with the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles at Jerusalem during the feast of Pentecost, the first Whit Sunday. On that same day through the preaching of Saint Peter three thousand men and women were baptized, and the first Christian community at Jerusalem was formed.

Before long the members of the Jerusalem Church were scattered by the persecution which followed the stoning of Saint Stephen. *“Go forth therefore,”* Christ had said, *“and teach all nations”* (Matt. 28:19). Obedient to this command they preached wherever they went, at first to Jews, but before long to Gentiles also. Some stories of these Apostolic journeys are recorded by Saint Luke in the book of Acts; others are preserved in the tradition of the Church. The legends about the Apostles may not always be literally true, but it is at any rate certain that within an astonishingly short time small Christian communities had sprung up in all the main centers of the Roman Empire and even in places beyond the Roman frontiers.

The Empire through which these first Christian missionaries traveled was, particularly in its eastern part, an empire of cities: This determined the administrative structure of the primitive Church. The basic unit was the community in each city, governed by its own bishop; to assist the bishop there were presbyters or priests, and deacons. The surrounding countryside depended on the Church of the city. This pattern, with the threefold ministry of bishops, priests, and deacons, was already widely established by the end of the first century. We can see it in the seven short letters which Saint Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, wrote about the year 107 as he traveled to Rome to be martyred. Ignatius laid emphasis upon two things in particular, the bishop and the Eucharist; he saw the Church as both hierarchical and sacramental. *“The bishop in each Church,”* he wrote, *“presides in place of God.”* *“Let no one do any of the things which concern the Church*

without the bishop... Wherever the bishop appears, there let the people be, just as wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church.” And it is the bishop’s primary and distinctive task to celebrate the Eucharist, “the medicine of immortality” (*To the Magnesians*, 6, 1; *To the Smyrnaeans*, 8, 1 and 2; *To the Ephesians*, 20, 2).

People today tend to think of the Church as a worldwide organization, in which each local body forms part of a larger and more inclusive whole. Ignatius did not look at the Church in this way. For him the local community is the Church. He thought of the Church as a Eucharistic society, which only realizes its true nature when it celebrates the Supper of the Lord, receiving His Body and Blood in the sacrament. But the Eucharist is something that can only happen locally — in each particular community gathered round its bishop; and at every local celebration of the Eucharist it is the *whole* Christ who is present, not just a part of Him. Therefore each local community, as it celebrates the Eucharist Sunday by Sunday, is the Church in its fullness.

The teaching of Ignatius has a permanent place in Orthodox tradition. Orthodoxy still thinks of the Church as a Eucharistic society, whose outward organization, however necessary, is secondary to its inner, sacramental life; and Orthodoxy still emphasizes the cardinal importance of the local community in the structure of the Church. To those who attend an Orthodox Pontifical Liturgy (*The Liturgy*: this is the term normally used by Orthodox to refer to the service of Holy Communion, the Mass), when the bishop stands at the beginning of the service in the middle of the church, surrounded by his flock, Ignatius of Antioch’s idea of the bishop as the center of unity in the local community will occur with particular vividness.

But besides the local community there is also the wider unity of the Church. This second aspect is developed in the writings of another martyr bishop, Saint Cyprian of Carthage (died 258). Cyprian saw all bishops as sharing in the one episcopate, yet sharing it in such a way that each possesses not a part but the whole. “The episcopate,” he wrote, “is a single whole, in which each bishop enjoys full possession. So is the Church a single whole, though it spreads far and wide into a multitude of churches as its fertility increases” (*On the Unity of the Church*, 5). There are many churches but only one Church; many *episcopi* but only one episcopate.

There were many others in the first three centuries of the Church who like Cyprian and Ignatius ended their lives as martyrs. The persecutions, it is true, were often local in character and usually limited in duration. Yet although there were long periods when the Roman authorities extended to Christianity a large measure of toleration, the threat of persecution was always there, and Christians knew that at any time this threat could become a reality. The idea of martyrdom had a central place in the spiritual outlook of the early Christians. They saw their Church as founded upon blood — not only the blood of Christ but also the blood of those “other Christs,” the martyrs. In later centuries when the Church became “established” and no longer suffered persecution, the idea of martyrdom did not disappear, but it took other forms: the monastic life, for example, is often regarded by Greek writers as an equivalent to martyrdom. The same approach is found also in the west: take, for instance, a Celtic text — an Irish homily of the seventh century — which likens the ascetic life to the way of the martyr:

Now there are three kinds of martyrdom which are accounted as a Cross to a man, white martyrdom, green martyrdom, and red martyrdom. White martyrdom consists in a man’s abandoning everything he loves for God’s sake... Green martyrdom consists in this, that by means of fasting and labor he frees himself from his evil desires; or suffers toil in penance and repentance. Red martyrdom consists in the endurance of a Cross or death for Christ’s sake (Quoted in J. Ryan, *Irish Monasticism*, London, 1931, p. 197).

At many periods in Orthodox history the prospect of red martyrdom has been fairly remote, and the green and white forms prevail. Yet there have also been times, above all in this present century, when Orthodox Christians have once again been called to undergo martyrdom of blood.

It was only natural that the bishops, who, as Cyprian emphasized, share in the one episcopate, should meet together in a council to discuss their common problems. Orthodoxy has always attached great importance to the place of councils in the life of the Church. It believes that the council is the chief organ whereby God has chosen to guide His people, and it regards the Catholic Church as essentially a *conciliar* Church. (Indeed, in Russian the same adjective *soborny* has the double sense of “catholic” and “conciliar,” while the corresponding noun, *sobor*, means both “church” and “council”). In the Church there is neither dictatorship nor individualism, but harmony and unanimity; men remain free but not isolated, for they are united in love, in faith, and in sacramental communion. In a council, this idea of harmony and free unanimity can be seen worked out in practice. In a true council no single member arbitrarily imposes his will upon the rest, but each consults with the others, and in this way they all freely achieve a “common mind.” A council is a living embodiment of the essential nature of the Church.

The first council in the Church’s history is described in Acts 15. Attended by the Apostles, it met at Jerusalem to decide how far Gentile converts should be subject to the Law of Moses. The Apostles, when they finally reached their decision, spoke in terms which in other circumstances might appear presumptuous: “*For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us*” (Acts 15:28). Later councils have ventured to speak with the same confidence. An isolated individual may well hesitate to say, “It seemed right to the Holy Spirit and to *me*”; but when gathered in council, the members of the Church can together claim an authority which individually none of them possesses.

The Council of Jerusalem, assembling as it did the leaders of the entire Church, was an exceptional gathering, for which there is no parallel until the Council of Nicaea in 325. But by Cyprian’s time it had already become usual to hold local councils, attended by all the bishops in a particular civil province of the Roman Empire. A local council of this type normally met in the provincial capital, under the presidency of the bishop of the capital, who was given the title Metropolitan. As the third century proceeded, councils widened in scope and began to include bishops not from one but from several civil provinces. These larger gatherings tended to assemble in the chief cities of the Empire, such as Alexandria or Antioch; and so it came about that the bishops of certain great cities began to acquire an importance above the provincial Metropolitans. But for the time being nothing was decided about the precise status of these great sees. Nor during the third century itself did this continual expansion of councils reach its logical conclusion: as yet (apart from the Apostolic Council) there had only been local councils, of lesser or greater extent, but no “general” council, formed of bishops from the whole Christian world, and claiming to speak in the name of the whole Church.

In 312 an event occurred which utterly transformed the outward situation of the Church. As he was riding through France with his army, the Emperor Constantine looked up into the sky and saw a cross of light in front of the sun. With the cross there was an inscription: *In this sign conquer*. As a result of this vision, Constantine became the first Roman Emperor to embrace the Christian faith. On that day in France a train of events was set in motion which brought the first main period of Church history to an end, and which led to the creation of the Christian Empire of Byzantium.

# Byzantium:

## The Church of the Seven Councils

“All profess that there are seven holy and Ecumenical Councils, and these are the seven pillars of the faith of the Divine Word on which He erected His holy mansion, the Catholic and Ecumenical Church” (John II, Metropolitan of Russia, 1800-1889).

### The establishment of an imperial Church

Constantine stands at a watershed in the history of the Church. With his conversion, the age of the martyrs and the persecutions drew to an end, and the Church of the Catacombs became the Church of the Empire. The first great effect of Constantine’s vision was the so-called “Edict” of Milan, which he and his fellow Emperor Licinius issued in 313, proclaiming the official toleration of the Christian faith. And though at first Constantine granted no more than toleration, he soon made it clear that he intended to favor Christianity above all the other tolerated religions in the Roman Empire. Theodosius, within fifty years of Constantine’s death, had carried this policy through to its conclusion: by his legislation he made Christianity not merely the most highly favored but the only recognized religion of the Empire. The Church was now established. “You are not allowed to exist,” the Roman authorities had once said to the Christians. Now it was the turn of paganism to be suppressed.

Constantine’s vision of the Cross led also, in his lifetime, to two further consequences, equally momentous for the later development of Christendom. First, in 324 he decided to move the capital of the Roman Empire eastward from Italy to the shores of the Bosphorus. Here, on the site of the Greek city of Byzantium, he built a new capital, which he named after himself, “Constantinoupolis.” The motives for this move were in part economic and political, but they were also religious: the Old Rome was too deeply stained with pagan associations to form the center of the Christian Empire which he had in mind. In the New Rome things were to be different: after the solemn inauguration of the city in 330, he laid down that at Constantinople no pagan rites should ever be performed. Constantine’s new capital has exercised a decisive influence upon the development of Orthodox history.

Secondly, Constantine summoned the first General or Ecumenical Council of the Christian Church at Nicaea in 325. If the Roman Empire was to be a Christian Empire, then Constantine wished to see it firmly based upon the one orthodox faith. It was the duty of the Nicene Council to elaborate the content of that faith. Nothing could have symbolized more dearly the new relation between Church and State than the outward circumstances of the gathering at Nicaea. The Emperor himself presided, “like some heavenly messenger of God” as one of those present, Eusebius, Bishop of Caesarea, expressed it. At the conclusion of the Council the bishops dined with the Emperor. “The circumstances of the banquet,” wrote Eusebius (who was inclined to be impressed by such things), “were splendid beyond description. Detachments of the bodyguard and other troops surrounded the entrance of the palace with drawn swords, and through the midst of these the men of God proceeded without fear into the innermost of the imperial apartments. Some were the Emperor’s own companions at table, others reclined on couches ranged on either side. One might have thought it was a picture of Christ’s kingdom, and a dream rather than reality” (*The Life of Constantine*, 3, 10 and 15). Matters had certainly changed since the time when Nero employed Christians as living torches to illuminate his gardens at night. Nicaea was the first of

seven General Councils; and these, like the city of Constantine, occupy a central position in the history of Orthodoxy.

The three events — the Edict of Milan, the foundation of Constantinople, and the Council of Nicaea — mark the Church's coming of age.

### **The first Six Councils (325-681).**

The life of the Church in the earlier Byzantine period is dominated by the seven General Councils. These Councils fulfilled a double task. First, they clarified and articulated the visible organization of the Church, crystallizing the position of the five great sees or *Patriarchates*, as they came to be known. Secondly, and more important, the Councils defined once and for all the Church's teaching upon the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith — the Trinity and the Incarnation. All Christians agree in regarding these things as “mysteries” which lie beyond human understanding and language. The bishops, when they drew up definitions at the Councils, did not imagine that they had explained the mystery; they merely sought to exclude certain false ways of speaking and thinking about it. To prevent men from deviating into error and heresy, they drew a fence around the mystery; that was all.

The discussions at the Councils at times sound abstract and remote, yet they were inspired by a very practical purpose: the salvation of man. Man, so the New Testament teaches, is separated from God by sin, and cannot through his own efforts break down the wall of separation which his sinfulness has created. God has therefore taken the initiative: He became man, was crucified, and rose from the dead, thereby delivering humanity from the bondage of sin and death. This is the central message of the Christian faith, and it is this message of redemption that the Councils were concerned to safeguard. Heresies were dangerous and required condemnation, because they impaired the teaching of the New Testament, setting up a barrier between man and God, and so making it impossible for man to attain full salvation.

Saint Paul expressed this message of redemption in terms of sharing. Christ shared our poverty that we might share the riches of His divinity: “*Our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich*” (2 Cor. 8:9). In Saint John's Gospel the same idea is found in a slightly different form. Christ states that He has given His disciples a share in the divine glory, and He prays that they may achieve union with God: “*And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one...*” (John 17:22-23). The Greek Fathers took these and similar texts in their literal sense, and dared to speak of man's “deification” (in Greek, *theosis*). If man is to share in God's glory, they argued, he is to be “perfectly one” with God, this means in effect that man must be “deified”: he is called to become by grace what God is by nature. Accordingly Saint Athanasius summed up the purpose of the Incarnation by saying: “God became man that we might be made god” (*On the Incarnation*, 54).

Now if this “being made god,” this *theosis*, is to be possible, Christ the Saviour must be both fully man and fully God. No one less than God can save man; therefore if Christ is to save, He must be God. But only if He is also truly a man, as we are, can we men participate in what He has done for us. A bridge is formed between God and man by the Incarnate Christ who is both. “*Hereafter you shall see heaven open,*” Our Lord promised, “*and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man*” (John 1:51). Not only angels use that ladder, but the human race.

Christ must be fully God and fully man. Each heresy in turn undermined some part of this vital affirmation. Either Christ was made less than God (Arianism); or His manhood was so di-

vided from His Godhead that He became two persons instead of one (Nestorianism); or He was not presented as truly man (Monophysitism, Monothelitism). Each Council defended this affirmation. The first two, held in the fourth century, concentrated upon the earlier part (that Christ must be fully God) and formulated the doctrine of the Trinity. The next four, during the fifth, sixth, and seventh centuries, turned to the second part (the fullness of Christ's manhood) and also sought to explain how manhood and Godhead could be united in a single person. The seventh Council, in defense of the Holy Icons, seems at first to stand somewhat apart, but like the first six it was ultimately concerned with the Incarnation and with man's salvation.

The main work of the Council of Nicaea in 325 was the condemnation of Arianism. Arius, a priest in Alexandria, maintained that the Son was inferior to the Father, and, in drawing a dividing line between God and creation, he placed the Son among created things: a superior creature, it is true, but a creature none the less. His motive, no doubt, was to protect the uniqueness and the transcendence of God, but the effect of his teaching, in making Christ less than God, was to render man's deification impossible. Only if Christ is truly God, the Council answered, can He unite us to God, for none but God Himself can open to man the way of union. Christ is "one in essence" (*homoousios*) with the Father. He is no demigod or superior creature, but God in the same sense that the Father is God: "true God from true God," the Council proclaimed in the Creed which it drew up, "begotten not made, *one in essence* with the Father."

The Council of Nicaea dealt also with the visible organization of the Church. It singled out for mention three great centers: Rome, Alexandria, and Antioch (Canon 6). It also laid down that the see of Jerusalem, while remaining subject to the Metropolitan of Caesarea, should be given the next place in honor after these three (Canon 7). Constantinople naturally was not mentioned, since it was not officially inaugurated as the new capital until five years later; it continued to be subject, as before, to the Metropolitan of Heraclea.

The work of Nicaea was taken up by the second Ecumenical Council, held at Constantinople in 381. This Council expanded and adapted the Nicene Creed, developing in particular the teaching upon the Holy Spirit, whom it affirmed to be God even as the Father and Son are God: "who proceeds from the Father, who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and together glorified." The Council also altered the provisions of the Sixth Canon of Nicaea. The position of Constantinople, now the capital of the Empire, could no longer be ignored, and it was assigned the second place, after Rome and above Alexandria. "The Bishop of Constantinople shall have the prerogatives of honor after the Bishop of Rome, because Constantinople is New Rome" (Canon 3).

Behind the definitions of the Councils lay the work of theologians, who gave precision to the words which the Councils employed. It was the supreme achievement of Saint Athanasius of Alexandria to draw out the full implications of the key word in the Nicene Creed: *homoousios*, one in essence or substance, consubstantial. Complementary to his work was that of the three Cappadocian Fathers, Saints Gregory of Nazianzus, known in the Orthodox Church as Gregory the Theologian (329?-390?), Basil the Great (330?-379), and his younger brother Gregory of Nyssa (died 394). While Athanasius emphasized the unity of God — Father and Son are one in essence (*ousia*) — the Cappadocians stressed God's threeness — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three persons (*hypostaseis*). Preserving a delicate balance between the threeness and the oneness in God, they gave full meaning to the classic summary of Trinitarian doctrine, three persons in one essence. Never before or since has the Church possessed four theologians of such stature within a single generation.

After 381 Arianism quickly ceased to be a living issue, except in certain parts of western Europe. The controversial aspect of the Council's work lay in its third Canon, which was resented alike by Rome and by Alexandria. Old Rome wondered where the claims of New Rome would end: might not Constantinople before long claim first place? Rome chose therefore to ignore the offending Canon, and not until the Lateran Council (1215) did the Pope formally recognize Constantinople's claim to second place. (Constantinople was at that time in the hands of the Crusaders and under the rule of a Latin Patriarch). But the Canon was equally a challenge to Alexandria, which hitherto had occupied the first place in the east. The next seventy years witnessed a sharp conflict between Constantinople and Alexandria, in which for a time the victory went to the latter. The first major Alexandrian success was at the Synod of the Oak, when Theophilus of Alexandria secured the deposition and exile of the Bishop of Constantinople, Saint John Chrysostom, "John of the Golden Mouth" (344?-407). A fluent and eloquent preacher — his sermons must often have lasted for an hour or more — John expressed in popular form the theological ideas put forward by Athanasius and the Cappadocians. A man of strict and austere life, he was inspired by a deep compassion for the poor and by a burning zeal for social righteousness. Of all the Fathers he is perhaps the best loved in the Orthodox Church, and the one whose works are most widely read.

Alexandria's second major success was won by the nephew and successor of Theophilus, Saint Cyril of Alexandria (died 444), who brought about the fall of another Bishop of Constantinople, Nestorius, at the third General Council, held in Ephesus (431). But at Ephesus there was more at stake than the rivalry of two great sees. Doctrinal issues, quiescent since 381, once more emerged, centering now not on the Trinity but on the Person of Christ. Cyril and Nestorius agreed that Christ was fully God, one of the Trinity, but they diverged in their descriptions of His manhood and in their method of explaining the union of God and man in a single person. They represented different traditions or schools of theology. Nestorius, brought up in the school of Antioch, upheld the integrity of Christ's manhood, but distinguished so emphatically between the manhood and the Godhead that he seemed in danger of ending, not with one person, but with two persons coexisting in the same body. Cyril, the protagonist of the opposite tradition of Alexandria, started from the unity of Christ's person rather than the diversity of His manhood and Godhead, but spoke about Christ's humanity less vividly than the Antiochenes. Either approach, if pressed too far, could lead to heresy, but the Church had need of both in order to form a balanced picture of the whole Christ. It was a tragedy for Christendom that the two schools, instead of balancing one another, entered into conflict.

Nestorius precipitated the controversy by declining to call the Virgin Mary "Mother of God" (*Theotokos*). This title was already accepted in popular devotion, but it seemed to Nestorius to imply a confusion of Christ's manhood and His Godhead. Mary, he argued — and here his Antiochene "separatism" is evident — is only to be called "Mother of Man" or at the most "Mother of Christ," since she is mother only of Christ's humanity, not of His divinity. Cyril, supported by the Council, answered with the text "*The Word was made flesh*" (John 1:14): Mary is God's mother, for "she bore the Word of God made flesh" (See the first of Cyril's *Twelve Anathemas*). What Mary bore was not a man loosely united to God, but a single and undivided person, who is God and man at once. The name *Theotokos* safeguards the unity of Christ's person: to deny her this title is to separate the Incarnate Christ into two, breaking down the bridge between God and man and erecting within Christ's person a middle wall of partition. Thus we can see that not only titles of devotion were involved at Ephesus, but the very message of salvation. The

same primacy that the word *homoousios* occupies in the doctrine of the Trinity, the word *Theotokos* holds in the doctrine of the Incarnation.

Alexandria won another victory at a second Council held in Ephesus in 449, but this gathering, unlike its predecessor of 431, was not accepted by the Church at large. It was felt that the Alexandrian party had this time gone too far. Dioscorus and Eutyches, pressing Cyril's teaching to extremes, maintained that in Christ there was not only a unity of personality but a single nature — Monophysitism. It seemed to their opponents — although the Monophysites themselves denied that this was a just interpretation of their views — that such a way of speaking endangered the fullness of Christ's manhood, which in Monophysitism became so fused with His divinity as to be swallowed up in it like a drop of water in the ocean.

Only two years later, in 451, the Emperor summoned to Chalcedon a fresh gathering of bishops, which the Church of Byzantium and the west regarded as the fourth General Council. The pendulum now swung back in an Antiochene direction. The Council reacted strongly against Monophysite terminology, and stated that while Christ is one person, there is in Him not one nature but two. The bishops acclaimed the Tome of Saint Leo the Great, Pope of Rome (died 461), in which the two natures are clearly distinguished. In their proclamation of faith they stated their belief in "one and the same Son, perfect in Godhead and perfect in manhood, truly God and truly man... acknowledged in *two natures* unconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably; the difference between the natures is in no way removed because of the union, but rather the peculiar property of each nature is preserved, and both combine in one person and in one *hypostasis*." The Definition of Chalcedon, we may note, is aimed not only at the Monophysites ("in two natures, unconfusedly, unchangeably"), but also at the followers of Nestorius ("one and the same Son... indivisibly, inseparably").

But Chalcedon was more than a defeat for Alexandrian theology: it was a defeat for Alexandrian claims to rule supreme in the east. Canon 28 of Chalcedon confirmed Canon 3 of Constantinople, assigning to New Rome the place next in honor after Old Rome. Leo repudiated this Canon, but the east has ever since recognized its validity. The Council also freed Jerusalem from the jurisdiction of Caesarea and gave it the fifth place among the great sees. The system later known among Orthodox as the Pentarchy was now complete, whereby five great sees in the Church were held in particular honor, and a settled order of precedence was established among them: in order of rank, Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem. All five claimed Apostolic foundation. The first four were the most important cities in the Roman Empire; the fifth was added because it was the place where Christ had suffered on the Cross and risen from the dead. The bishop in each of these cities received the title *Patriarch*. The five Patriarchates between them divided into spheres of jurisdiction the whole of the known world, apart from Cyprus, which was granted independence by the Council of Ephesus and has remained self-governing ever since.

When speaking of the Orthodox conception of the Pentarchy there are two possible misunderstandings which must be avoided. First, the system of Patriarchs and Metropolitans is a matter of *ecclesiastical organization*. But if we look at the Church from the viewpoint not of ecclesiastical order but of *divine right*, then we must say that all bishops are essentially equal, however humble or exalted the city over which each presides. All bishops share equally in the apostolic succession, all have the same sacramental powers, all are divinely appointed teachers of the faith. If a dispute about doctrine arises, it is not enough for the Patriarchs to express their opinion: *every* diocesan bishop has the right to attend a General Council, to speak, and to cast his vote.

The system of the Pentarchy does not impair the essential equality of all bishops, nor does it deprive each local community of the importance which Ignatius assigned to it.

The Orthodox Church does not accept the doctrine of Papal authority set forth in the decrees of the Vatican Council of 1870, and taught today in the Roman Catholic Church; but at the same time Orthodoxy does not deny to the Holy and Apostolic See of Rome a primacy of honor, together with the right (under certain conditions) to hear appeals from all parts of Christendom.

Note that we have used the word “primacy,” not “supremacy.” Orthodox regard the Pope as the bishop “who presides in love,” to adapt a phrase of Saint Ignatius: Rome’s mistake — so Orthodox believe — has been to turn this primacy or “presidency of love” into a supremacy of external power and jurisdiction.

This primacy which Rome enjoys takes its origin from three factors. First, Rome was the city where Saint Peter and Saint Paul were martyred, and where Peter was bishop. \*\*\*The Orthodox Church acknowledges Peter as the first among the Apostles: it does not forget the celebrated “Petrine texts” in the Gospels (Matthew 26:18-19; Luke 22:32; John 21:15-17) although Orthodox theologians do not understand these texts in quite the same way as modern Roman Catholic commentators.

And while many Orthodox theologians would say that not only the Bishop of Rome but all bishops are successors of Peter, yet most of them at the same time admit that the Bishop of Rome is Peter’s successor in a special sense. Secondly, the see of Rome also owed its primacy to the position occupied by the city of Rome in the Empire: she was the capital, the chief city of the ancient world, and such in some measure she continued to be even after the foundation of Constantinople. Thirdly, although there were occasions when Popes fell into heresy, on the whole during the first eight centuries of the Church’s history the Roman see was noted for the purity of its faith: other Patriarchates wavered during the great doctrinal disputes, but Rome for the most part stood firm. When hard pressed in the struggle against heretics, men felt that they could turn with confidence to the Pope. Not only the Bishop of Rome, but every bishop, is appointed by God to be a teacher of the faith; yet because the see of Rome had in practice taught the faith with an outstanding loyalty to the truth, it was above all to Rome that men appealed for guidance in the early centuries of the Church.

But as with Patriarchs, so with the Pope: the primacy assigned to Rome does not overthrow the essential equality of all bishops. The Pope is the first bishop in the Church — but he is the *first among equals*.

Ephesus and Chalcedon were a rock of Orthodoxy, but they were also a terrible rock of offence. The Arians had been gradually reconciled and formed no lasting schism. But to this day there exist Nestorian Christians who cannot accept the decisions of Ephesus, and Monophysites who cannot accept those of Chalcedon. The Nestorians lay for the most part outside the Empire, and little more is heard of them in Byzantine history. But large numbers of Monophysites, particularly in Egypt and Syria, were subjects of the Emperor, and repeated though unsuccessful efforts were made to bring them back into communion with the Byzantine Church. As so often, theological differences were made more bitter by cultural and national tension. Egypt and Syria, both predominantly non-Greek in language and background, resented the power of Greek Constantinople, alike in religious and in political matters. Thus ecclesiastical schism was reinforced by political separatism. Had it not been for these non-theological factors, the two sides might perhaps have reached a theological understanding after Chalcedon. Many modern scholars are inclined to think that the difference between Monophysites and “Chalcedonians” was basically

one of terminology, not of theology: the two parties used different language, but ultimately both were concerned to uphold the same truths.

The Definition of Chalcedon was supplemented by two later Councils, both held at Constantinople. The fifth Ecumenical Council (553) reinterpreted the decrees of Chalcedon from an Alexandrian point of view, and sought to explain, in more constructive terms than Chalcedon had used, how the two natures of Christ unite to form a single person. The sixth Ecumenical Council (680-681) condemned the Monothelite heresy, a new form of Monophysitism. The Monothelites argued that although Christ has two natures, yet since He is a single person, He has only one will. The Council replied that if He has two natures, then He must also have two wills. The Monothelites, like the Monophysites, impaired the fullness of Christ's humanity, since manhood without a human will would be incomplete, a mere abstraction. Since Christ is true man as well as true God, He must have a human will as well as a divine.

During the fifty years before the meeting of the sixth Council, Byzantium was faced with a sudden and alarming development: the rise of Islam. The most striking fact about Mohammedan expansion is its speed. When the Prophet died in 632, his authority scarcely extended beyond the Hejaz. But within fifteen years his Arab followers had taken Syria, Palestine, and Egypt; within fifty years they were at the walls of Constantinople and almost captured the city; within a hundred they had swept across North Africa, advanced through Spain, and forced western Europe to fight for its life at the Battle of Poitiers. The Arab invasions have been called "a centrifugal explosion, driving in every direction small bodies of mounted raiders in quest of food, plunder, and conquest. The old empires were in no state to resist them" (H. St. L. B. Moss, in Baynes and Moss, *Byzantium: An Introduction*, Oxford, 1948, pp. 11-12). Christendom survived, but only with difficulty. The Byzantines lost their eastern possessions, and the three Patriarchates of Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem passed under infidel control; within the Christian Empire of the East, the Patriarchate of Constantinople was now without rival. Henceforward Byzantium was never free for very long from Mohammedan attacks, and although it held out for eight centuries more, yet in the end it succumbed.

## The holy icons

Disputes concerning the Person of Christ did not cease with the Council of 681, but were extended in a different form into the eighth and ninth centuries. The struggle centered on the Holy Icons, the pictures of Christ, the Mother of God, and the Saints, which were kept and venerated both in churches and in private homes. The Iconoclasts or icon-smashers, suspicious of any religious art which represented human beings or God, demanded the destruction of icons; the opposite party, the Iconodules or venerators of icons, vigorously defended the place of icons in the life of the Church. The struggle was not merely a conflict between two conceptions of Christian art. Deeper issues were involved: the character of Christ's human nature, the Christian attitude towards matter, the true meaning of Christian redemption.

The Iconoclasts may have been influenced from the outside by Jewish and Moslem ideas, and it is significant that three years before the first outbreak of Iconoclasm in the Byzantine Empire, the Mohammedan Caliph Yezid ordered the removal of all icons within his dominions. But Iconoclasm was not simply imported from outside; within Christianity itself there had always existed a "puritan" outlook, which condemned icons because it saw in all images a latent idolatry. When the Isaurian Emperors attacked icons, they found plenty of support inside the Church. Typical of this puritan outlook is the action of Saint Epiphanius of Salamis (315?-403), who, on finding in a Palestinian village church a curtain woven with the figure of Christ, tore it down

with indignation. This attitude was always strong in Asia Minor, and some hold that the Iconoclast movement was an Asiatic protest against Greek tradition. But there are difficulties in such a view; the controversy was really a split *within* the Greek tradition.

The Iconoclast controversy, which lasted some 120 years, falls into two phases. The first period opened in 726 when Leo 3 began his attack on icons, and ended in 780 when the Empress Irene suspended the persecution. The Iconodule position was upheld by the seventh and last Ecumenical Council (787), which met (as the first had done) at Nicaea. Icons, the Council proclaimed, are to be kept in churches and honored with the same relative veneration as is shown to other material symbols, such as “the precious and life-giving Cross” and the Book of the Gospels. A new attack on icons, started by Leo V the Armenian in 815, continued until 843 when the icons were again reinstated, this time permanently, by another Empress, Theodora. The final victory of the Holy Images in 843 is known as “the Triumph of Orthodoxy,” and is commemorated in a special service celebrated on “Orthodoxy Sunday,” the first Sunday in Lent. During this service the true faith — Orthodoxy — is proclaimed, its defenders are honored, and anathemas pronounced on all who attack the Holy Icons or the Seven General Councils:

To those who reject the Councils of the Holy Fathers, and their traditions which are agreeable to divine revelation, and which the Orthodox Catholic Church piously maintains, ANATHEMA! ANATHEMA! ANATHEMA!

The chief champion of the icons in the first period was Saint John of Damascus (675-749), in the second Saint Theodore of Studium (759-826). John was able to work the more freely because he dwelt in Moslem territory, out of reach of the Byzantine government. It was not the last time that Islam acted unintentionally as the protector of Orthodoxy.

One of the distinctive features of Orthodoxy is the place which it assigns to icons. An Orthodox church today is filled with them: dividing the sanctuary from the body of the building there is a solid screen, the iconostasis, entirely covered with icons, while other icons are placed in special shrines around the church; and perhaps the walls are covered with icons in fresco or mosaic. An Orthodox prostrates himself before these icons, he kisses them and burns candles in front of them; they are censed by the priest and carried in procession. What do these gestures and actions mean? What do icons signify, and why did John of Damascus and others regard them as important?

We shall consider first the charge of idolatry, which the Iconoclasts brought against the Iconodules; then the positive value of icons as a means of instruction; and finally their doctrinal importance.

*The question of idolatry.* When an Orthodox kisses an icon or prostrates himself before it, he is not guilty of idolatry. The icon is not an idol but a symbol; the veneration shown to images is directed, not towards stone, wood, and paint, but towards the person depicted. This had been pointed out some time before the Iconoclast controversy by Leontius of Neapolis (died about 650):

We do not make obeisance to the nature of wood, but we revere and do obeisance to Him who was crucified on the Cross.... When the two beams of the Cross are joined together I adore the figure because of Christ who on the Cross was crucified, but if the beams are separated, I throw them away and burn them (Migne, *Patrologia Graeca* [P.G.], xciv, 1384D).

Because icons are only symbols, Orthodox do not *worship* them, but *reverence* or *venerate* them. John of Damascus carefully distinguished between the relative honor or veneration shown to material symbols, and the worship due to God alone.

*Icons as part of the Church's teaching.* Icons, said Leontius, are “opened books to remind us of God” (*P.G.* xciv, 1276A); they are one of the means which the Church employs in order to teach the faith. He who lacks learning or leisure to study works of theology has only to enter a church to see unfolded before him on the walls all the mysteries of the Christian religion. If a pagan asks you to show him your faith, said the Iconodules, take him into church and place him before the icons (*Ad Constantinum Cabalinum, P.G.* xcv, 325c. Icons are a part of Holy Tradition [see p. 214]).

*The doctrinal significance of icons.* Here we come to the real heart of the Iconoclast dispute. Granted that icons are not idolatrous; granted that they are useful for instruction; but are they not only permissible but necessary? Is it *essential* to have icons? The Iconodules held that it is, because icons safeguard a full and proper doctrine of the Incarnation. Iconoclasts and Iconodules agreed that God cannot be represented in His eternal nature: “*No man hath seen God at any time*” (John 1:18). But, the Iconodules continued, the Incarnation has made a representational religious art possible: God can be depicted because He became man and took flesh. Material images, argued John of Damascus, can be made of Him who took a material body:

Of old God the incorporeal and uncircumscribed was not depicted at all. But now that God has appeared in the flesh and lived among men, I make an image of the God who can be seen. I do not worship matter but I worship the Creator of matter, who for my sake became material and deigned to dwell in matter, who through matter effected my salvation. I will not cease from worshipping the matter through which my salvation has been effected (*On Icons, I, 16, P. G.* xciv 1245A).

The Iconoclasts, by repudiating all representations of God, failed to take full account of the Incarnation. They fell, as so many puritans have done, into a kind of dualism. Regarding matter as a defilement, they wanted a religion freed from all contact with what is material; for they thought that what is spiritual must be non-material. But this is to betray the Incarnation, by allowing no place to Christ's humanity, to His body; it is to forget that man's body as well as his soul must be saved and transfigured. The Iconoclast controversy is thus closely linked to the earlier disputes about Christ's person. It was not merely a controversy about religious art, but about the Incarnation and the salvation of man.

God took a material body, thereby proving that matter can be redeemed: “The Word made flesh has deified the flesh,” said John of Damascus (*On Icons, I, 21 [P.G. xciv, 1253B]*). God has “deified” matter, making it “spirit-bearing”; and if flesh became a vehicle of the Spirit, then so — though in a different way — can wood and paint. The Orthodox doctrine of icons is bound up with the Orthodox belief that the whole of God's creation, material as well as spiritual, is to be redeemed and glorified. In the words of Nicholas Zernov (1898-1980) — what he says of Russians is true of all Orthodox:

Icons were for the Russians not merely paintings. They were dynamic manifestations of man's spiritual power to redeem creation through beauty and art. The colors and lines of the [icons] were not meant to imitate nature; the artists aimed at demonstrating that men, animals, and plants, and the whole cosmos, could be rescued from their present state of degradation and restored to their proper “Image.” The [icons] were

pledges of the coming victory of a redeemed creation over the fallen one.... The artistic perfection of an icon was not only a reflection of the celestial glory — it was a concrete example of matter restored to its original harmony and beauty, and serving as a vehicle of the Spirit. The icons were part of the transfigured cosmos (*The Russians and Their Church*, pp. 107-108).

As John of Damascus put it:

The icon is a song of triumph, and a revelation, and an enduring monument to the victory of the saints and the disgrace of the demons (*On Icons*, 2, 2 [P.G. xciv, 1296B]).

The conclusion of the Iconoclast dispute, the meeting of the seventh Ecumenical Council, the Triumph of Orthodoxy in 843 — these mark the end of the second period in Orthodox history, the period of the Seven Councils. These Seven Councils are of immense importance to Orthodoxy. For members of the Orthodox Church, their interest is not merely historical but contemporary; they are the concern not only of scholars and clergy, but of all the faithful. “Even illiterate peasants,” said Dean Stanley, “to whom, in the corresponding class of life in Spain or Italy, the names of Constance and Trent would probably be quite unknown, are well aware that their Church reposes on the basis of the Seven Councils, and retain a hope that they may yet live to see an eighth General Council, in which the evils of the time will be set straight” (*Lectures on the History of the Eastern Church* [Everyman Edition], p. 99). Orthodox often call themselves “the Church of the Seven Councils.” By this they do not mean that the Orthodox Church has ceased to think creatively since 787. But they see in the period of the Councils the great age of theology; and, next to the Bible, it is the Seven Councils which the Orthodox Church takes as its standard and guide in seeking solutions to the new problems which arise in every generation.

### **Saints, monks, and emperors**

Not without reason has Byzantium been called “the icon of the heavenly Jerusalem.” Religion entered into every aspect of Byzantine life. The Byzantine’s holidays were religious festivals; the races which he attended in the Circus began with the singing of hymns; his trade contracts invoked the Trinity and were marked with the sign of the Cross. Today, in an untheological age, it is all but impossible to realize how burning an interest was felt in religious questions by every part of society, by laity as well as clergy, by the poor and uneducated as well as the Court and the scholars. Gregory of Nyssa describes the unending theological arguments in Constantinople at the time of the second General Council:

The whole city is full of it, the squares, the market places, the cross-roads, the alleyways; old-clothes men, money changers, food sellers: they are all busy arguing. If you ask someone to give you change, he philosophizes about the Begotten and the Unbegotten; if you inquire about the price of a loaf, you are told by way of reply that the Father is greater and the Son inferior; if you ask “Is my bath ready?” the attendant answers that the Son was made out of nothing (*On the Deity of the Son* [P.G. xlvi, 557B]).

This curious complaint indicates the atmosphere in which the Councils met. So violent were the passions aroused that sessions were not always restrained or dignified. “Synods and councils I salute from a distance,” Gregory of Nazianzus dryly remarked, “for I know how troublesome

they are. Never again will I sit in those gatherings of cranes and geese” (*Letter 124; Poems about Himself*, 27, 91). The Fathers at times supported their cause by questionable means: Cyril of Alexandria, for example, in his struggle against Nestorius, bribed the Court heavily and terrorized the city of Ephesus with a private army of monks. Yet if Cyril was intemperate in his methods, it was because of his consuming desire that the right cause should triumph; and if Christians were at times acrimonious, it was because they cared about the Christian faith. Perhaps disorder is better than apathy. Orthodoxy recognizes that the Councils were attended by imperfect men, but it believes that these imperfect men were guided by the Holy Spirit.

The Byzantine bishop was not only a distant figure who attended Councils; he was also in many cases a true father to his people, a friend and protector to whom men confidently turned when in trouble. The concern for the poor and oppressed which John Chrysostom displayed is found in many others. Saint John the Almsgiver, Patriarch of Alexandria (died 619), for example, devoted all the wealth of his see to helping those whom he called “my brethren, the poor.” When his own resources failed, he appealed to others: “He used to say,” a contemporary recorded, “that if, without ill-will, a man were to strip the rich right down to their shirts in order to give to the poor, he would do no wrong” (Leontius of Neapolis, *A Supplement to the Life of John the Almsgiver*, 21). “Those whom you call poor and beggars,” John said, “these I proclaim my masters and helpers. For they, and they alone, can really help us and bestow upon us the kingdom of heaven” (Leontius, *Supplement*, 2). The Church in the Byzantine Empire did not overlook its social obligations, and one of its principal functions was charitable work.

Monasticism played a decisive part in the religious life of Byzantium, as it has done in that of all Orthodox countries. It has been rightly said that “the best way to penetrate Orthodox spirituality is to enter it through monasticism” (P. Evdokimov, *L’Orthodoxie*, p. 20). There is a great richness of forms of the spiritual life to be found within the bounds of Orthodoxy, but monasticism remains the most classical of all (V. Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, p. 17). The monastic life first emerged as a definite institution in Egypt at the start of the fourth century, and from there it spread rapidly across Christendom. It is no coincidence that monasticism should have developed immediately after Constantine’s conversion, at the very time when the persecutions ceased and Christianity became fashionable. The monks with their austerities were martyrs in an age when martyrdom of blood no longer existed; they formed the counterbalance to an established Christendom. Men in Byzantine society were in danger of forgetting that Byzantium was an icon and symbol, not the reality; they ran the risk of identifying the kingdom of God with an earthly kingdom. The monks by their withdrawal from society into the desert fulfilled a prophetic and eschatological ministry in the life of the Church. They reminded Christians that the kingdom of God is not of this world.

Monasticism has taken three chief forms, all of which had appeared in Egypt by the year 350, and all of which are still to be found in the Orthodox Church today. There are first the *hermits*, men leading the solitary life in huts or caves, and even in tombs, among the branches of trees, or on the tops of pillars. The great model of the eremitic life is the father of monasticism himself, Saint Antony of Egypt (251-356). Secondly there is the *community life*, where monks dwell together under a common rule and in a regularly constituted monastery. Here the great pioneer was Saint Pachomius of Egypt (286-346), author of a rule later used by Saint Benedict in the west. Basil the Great, whose ascetic writings have exercised a formative influence on eastern monasticism, was a strong advocate of the community life. Giving a social emphasis to monasticism, he urged that religious houses should care for the sick and poor, maintaining hospitals and orphanages, and working directly for the benefit of society at large. But in general eastern mo-

nasticism has been far less concerned than western with active work; in Orthodoxy a monk's primary task is the life of prayer, and it is through this that he serves others. It is not so much what a monk does that matters, as what he is. Finally there is a form of the monastic life intermediate between the first two, the *semi-eremitic life*, a "middle way" where instead of a single highly organized community there is a loosely knit group of small settlements, each settlement containing perhaps between two and six brethren living together under the guidance of an elder. The great centers of the semi-eremitic life in Egypt were Nitria and Scetis, which by the end of the fourth century had produced many outstanding monks — Ammon the founder of Nitria, Macarius of Egypt and Macarius of Alexandria, Evagrius of Pontus, and Arsenius the Great. (This semi-eremitic system is found not only in the east but in the far west, in Celtic monasticism).

Because of its monasteries, fourth-century Egypt was regarded as a second Holy Land, and travelers to Jerusalem felt their pilgrimage to be incomplete unless it included the ascetic houses of the Nile. In the fifth and sixth centuries leadership in the monastic movement shifted to Palestine, with Saint Euthymius the Great (died 473) and his disciple Saint Sabbas (died 532). The monastery founded by Saint Sabbas in the Jordan valley can claim an unbroken history to the present day; it was to this community that John of Damascus belonged. Almost as old is another important house with an unbroken history to the present, the monastery of Saint Catherine at Mount Sinai, founded by the Emperor Justinian (reigned 527-565). With Palestine and Sinai in Arab hands, monastic pre-eminence in the Byzantine Empire passed to the huge monastery of the Studium at Constantinople, originally founded in 463; Saint Theodore was Abbot here and revised the rule of the community.

Since the tenth century the chief center of Orthodox monasticism has been Athos, a rocky peninsula in North Greece jutting out into the Aegean and culminating at its tip in a peak 6,670 feet high. Known as "the Holy Mountain," Athos contains twenty "ruling" monasteries and a large number of smaller houses, as well as hermits' cells; the whole peninsula is given up entirely to monastic settlements, and in the days of its greatest expansion it is said to have contained nearly forty thousand monks. One out of the twenty ruling monasteries has by itself produced 26 Patriarchs and 144 bishops: this gives some idea of the importance of Athos in Orthodox history.

There are no "Orders" in Orthodox monasticism. In the west a monk belongs to the Carthusian, the Cistercian, or some other Order; in the east he is simply a member of the one great brotherhood which includes all monks and nuns, although of course he is attached to a particular monastic house. Western writers sometimes refer to Orthodox monks as "Basilian monks" or "monks of the Basilian Order," but this is not correct. Saint Basil is an important figure in Orthodox monasticism, but he founded no Order, and although two of his works are known as the *Longer Rules* and the *Shorter Rules*, these are in no sense comparable to the *Rule* of Saint Benedict.

A characteristic figure in Orthodox monasticism is the "elder" or "old man" (Greek *gerōn*; Russian *starets*, plural *startsi*). The elder is a monk of spiritual discernment and wisdom, whom others — either monks or people in the world — adopt as their guide and spiritual director. He is sometimes a priest, but often a lay monk; he receives no special ordination or appointment to the work of eldership, but is guided to it by the direct inspiration of the Spirit. The elder sees in a concrete and practical way what the will of God is in relation to each person who comes to consult him: this is the elder's special gift or charisma. The earliest and most celebrated of the monastic *startsi* was Saint Antony himself. The first part of his life, from eighteen to fifty-five, he

spent in withdrawal and solitude; then, though still living in the desert, he abandoned this life of strict enclosure, and began to receive visitors. A group of disciples gathered round him, and besides these disciples there was a far larger circle of people who came, often from a long distance, to ask his advice; so great was the stream of visitors that, as Antony's biographer Athanasius put it, he became a physician to all Egypt. Antony has had many successors, and in most of them the same outward pattern of events is found — a withdrawal in order to return. A monk must first withdraw, and in silence must learn the truth about himself and God: Then, after this long and rigorous preparation in solitude, having gained the gifts of discernment which are required of an elder, he can open the door of his cell and admit the world from which formerly he fled.

At the heart of the Christian polity of Byzantium was the Emperor, who was no ordinary ruler, but God's representative on earth. If Byzantium was an icon of the heavenly Jerusalem, then the earthly monarchy of the Emperor was an image or icon of the monarchy of God in heaven; in church men prostrated themselves before the icon of Christ, and in the palace before God's living icon — the Emperor. The labyrinthine palace, the Court with its elaborate ceremonial, the throne room where mechanical lions roared and musical birds sang: these things were designed to make clear the Emperor's status as vicegerent of God. "By such means," wrote the Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, "we figure forth the harmonious movement of God the Creator around this universe, while the imperial power is preserved in proportion and order" (*Book of Ceremonies*, Prologue). The Emperor had a special place in the Church's worship: he could not of course celebrate the Eucharist, but he received communion "as priests do," he preached sermons, on certain feasts he censed the altar. The vestments which Orthodox bishops now wear are the vestments once worn by the Emperor in church.

The life of Byzantium formed a unified whole, and there was no rigid line of separation between the religious and the secular, between Church and State: the two were seen as parts of a single organism. Hence it was inevitable that the Emperor played an active part in the affairs of the Church. Yet at the same time it is not just to accuse Byzantium of Caesaro-Papism, of subordinating the Church to the State. Although Church and State formed a single organism, yet within this one organism there were two distinct elements, the priesthood (*sacerdotium*) and the imperial power (*imperium*); and while working in close cooperation, each of these elements had its own proper sphere in which it was autonomous. Between the two there was a "symphony" or "harmony," but neither element exercised absolute control over the other.

This is the doctrine expounded in the great code of Byzantine law drawn up under Justinian (see the sixth *Novel*) and repeated in many other Byzantine texts. Take for example the words of Emperor John Tzimisces: "I recognize two authorities, priesthood and empire; the Creator of the world entrusted to the first the care of souls and to the second the control of men's bodies. Let neither authority be attacked, that the world may enjoy prosperity" (Quoted in N. H. Baynes, *Byzantine Studies*, London, 1955, p. 52). Thus it was the Emperor's task to summon councils and to carry their decrees into effect, but it lay beyond his powers to dictate the content of those decrees: it was for the bishops gathered in council to decide what the true faith was. Bishops were appointed by God to teach the faith, whereas the Emperor was the protector of Orthodoxy, but not its exponent. Such was the theory, and such in great part was the practice also. Admittedly there were many occasions on which the Emperor interfered unwarrantably in ecclesiastical matters; but when a serious question of principle arose, the authorities of the Church quickly showed that they had a will of their own. Iconoclasm, for example, was vigorously championed by a whole series of Emperors, yet for all that it was successfully rejected by the Church. In Byzantine history Church and State were closely interdependent, but neither was subordinate to the other.

There are many today, not only outside but within the Orthodox Church, who sharply criticize the Byzantine Empire and the idea of a Christian society for which it stands. Yet were the Byzantines entirely wrong? They believed that Christ, who lived on earth as a man, has redeemed every aspect of human existence, and they held that it was therefore possible to baptize not human individuals only but the whole spirit and organization of society. So they strove to create a polity entirely Christian in its principles of government and in its daily life. Byzantium in fact was nothing less than an attempt to accept and to apply the full implications of the Incarnation. Certainly the attempt had its dangers: in particular the Byzantines often fell into the error of identifying the earthly kingdom of Byzantium with the Kingdom of God, the Greek people with God's people. Certainly Byzantium fell far short of the high ideal which it set itself, and its failure was often lamentable and disastrous. The tales of Byzantine duplicity, violence, and cruelty are too well known to call for repetition here. They are true — but they are only a part of the truth. For behind all the shortcomings of Byzantium can always be discerned the great vision by which the Byzantines were inspired: to establish here on earth a living icon of God's government in heaven.

## Byzantium: The Great Schism

“We are unchanged; we are still the same as we were in the eighth century... Oh that you could only consent to be again what you were once, when we were both united in faith and communion!” (Alexis Khomiakov).

### The estrangement of Eastern and Western Christendom

One summer afternoon in the year 1054, as a service was about to begin in the Church of the Holy Wisdom (in Greek, “Hagia Sophia”; often called “Saint Sophia” or “Sancta Sophia” by English writers) at Constantinople, Cardinal Humbert and two other legates of the Pope entered the building and made their way up to the sanctuary. They had not come to pray. They placed a Bull of Excommunication upon the altar and marched out once more. As he passed through the western door, the Cardinal shook the dust from his feet with the words: “Let God look and judge.” A deacon ran out after him in great distress and begged him to take back the Bull. Humbert refused; and it was dropped in the street.

It is this incident which has conventionally been taken to mark the beginning of the great schism between the Orthodox east and the Latin west. But the schism, as historians now generally recognize, is not really an event whose beginning can be exactly dated. It was something that came about gradually, as the result of a long and complicated process, starting well before the eleventh century and not completed until some time after.

In this long and complicated process, many different influences were at work. The schism was conditioned by cultural, political, and economic factors; yet its fundamental cause was not secular but theological. In the last resort it was over matters of doctrine that east and west quarreled — two matters in particular: the Papal claims and the *filioque*. But before we look more closely at these two major differences, and before we consider the actual course of the schism,

something must be said about the wider background. Long before there was an open and formal schism between east and west, the two sides had become strangers to one another; and in attempting to understand how and why the communion of Christendom was broken, we must start with this fact of increasing estrangement.

When Paul and the other Apostles traveled around the Mediterranean world, they moved within a closely-knit political and cultural unity: the Roman Empire. This Empire embraced many different national groups, often with languages and dialects of their own. But all these groups were governed by the same Emperor; there was a broad Greco-Roman civilization in which educated people throughout the Empire shared; either Greek or Latin was understood almost everywhere in the Empire, and many could speak both languages. These facts greatly assisted the early Church in its missionary work.

But in the centuries that followed, the unity of the Mediterranean world gradually disappeared. The political unity was the first to go. From the end of the third century the Empire, while still theoretically one, was usually divided into two parts, an eastern and a western, each under its own Emperor. Constantine furthered this process of separation by founding a second imperial capital in the east, alongside Old Rome in Italy. Then came the barbarian invasions at the start of the fifth century: apart from Italy, much of which remained within the Empire for some time longer, the west was carved up among barbarian chiefs. The Byzantines never forgot the ideals of Rome under Augustus and Trajan, and still regarded their Empire as in theory universal; but Justinian was the last Emperor who seriously attempted to bridge the gulf between theory and fact, and his conquests in the west were soon abandoned. The political unity of the Greek east and the Latin west was destroyed by the barbarian invasions, and never permanently restored.

The severance was carried a stage further by the rise of Islam: the Mediterranean, which the Romans once called *mare nostrum*, "our sea," now passed largely into Arab control. Cultural and economic contacts between the eastern and western Mediterranean never entirely ceased, but they became far more difficult.

Cut off from Byzantium, the west proceeded to set up a "Roman" Empire of its own. On Christmas Day in the year 800 the Pope crowned Charles the Great, King of the Franks, as Emperor. Charlemagne sought recognition from the ruler at Byzantium, but without success; for the Byzantines, still adhering to the principle of imperial unity, regarded Charlemagne as an intruder and the Papal coronation as an act of schism within the Empire. The creation of a Holy Roman Empire in the west, instead of drawing Europe closer together, only served to alienate east and west more than before.

The cultural unity lingered on, but in a greatly attenuated form. Both in east and west, men of learning still lived within the classical tradition which the Church had taken over and made its own; but as time went on they began to interpret this tradition in increasingly divergent ways. Matters were made more difficult by problems of language. The days when educated men were bilingual were over. By the year 450 there were very few in western Europe who could read Greek, and after 600, although Byzantium still called itself the *Roman* Empire, it was rare for a Byzantine to speak Latin, the language of the Romans. Photius, the greatest scholar in ninth century Constantinople, could not read Latin; and in 864 a "Roman" Emperor at Byzantium, Michael III, even called the language in which Virgil once wrote "a barbarian and Scythic tongue." If Greeks wished to read Latin works or vice versa, they could do so only in translation, and usually they did not trouble to do even that: Psellus, an eminent Greek savant of the eleventh century, had so sketchy a knowledge of Latin literature that he confused Caesar with Cicero. Be-

cause they no longer drew upon the same sources nor read the same books, Greek east and Latin west drifted more and more apart.

It was an ominous but significant precedent that the cultural renaissance in Charlemagne's Court should have been marked at its outset by a strong anti-Greek prejudice. The hostility and defiance which the new Roman Empire of the west felt towards Constantinople extended beyond the political field to the cultural. Men of letters in Charlemagne's entourage were not prepared to copy Byzantium, but sought to create a new Christian civilization of their own. In fourth-century Europe there had been one Christian civilization, in thirteenth-century Europe there were two; perhaps it is in the reign of Charlemagne that the schism of civilizations first becomes clearly apparent.

The Byzantines for their part remained enclosed in their own world of ideas, and did little to meet the west half way. Alike in the ninth and in later centuries they usually failed to take western learning as seriously as it deserved. They dismissed all "Franks" as barbarians and nothing more.

These political and cultural factors could not but affect the life of the Church, and make it harder to maintain religious unity. Cultural and political estrangement can lead only too easily to ecclesiastical disputes, as may be seen from the case of Charlemagne. Refused recognition in the political sphere by the Byzantine Emperor, he was quick to retaliate with a charge of heresy against the Byzantine Church: he denounced the Greeks for not using the *filioque* in the Creed (of this we shall say more in a moment) and he declined to accept the decisions of the seventh Ecumenical Council. It is true that Charlemagne only knew of these decisions through a faulty translation which seriously distorted their true meaning; but he seems in any case to have been semi-Iconoclast in his views.

The different political situations in east and west made the Church assume different outward forms, so that men came gradually to think of Church order in conflicting ways. From the start there had been a certain difference of emphasis here between east and west. In the east there were many Churches whose foundation went back to the Apostles; there was a strong sense of the equality of all bishops, of the collegial and conciliar nature of the Church. The east acknowledged the Pope as the first bishop in the Church, but saw him as the first among equals. In the west, on the other hand, there was only one great see claiming Apostolic foundation — Rome — so that Rome came to be regarded as *the* Apostolic see. The west, while it accepted the decisions of the Ecumenical Councils, did not play a very active part in the Councils themselves; the Church was seen less as a college and more as a monarchy — the monarchy of the Pope.

This initial divergence in outlook was made more acute by political developments. As was only natural, the barbarian invasions and the consequent breakdown of the Empire in the west served greatly to strengthen the autocratic structure of the western Church. In the east there was a strong secular head, the Emperor, to uphold the civilized order and to enforce law. In the west, after the advent of the barbarians, there was only a plurality of warring chiefs, all more or less usurpers. For the most part it was the Papacy alone which could act as a center of unity, as an element of continuity and stability in the spiritual and political life of western Europe. By force of circumstances, the Pope assumed a part which the Greek Patriarchs were not called to play: he became an autocrat, an absolute monarch set up over the Church, issuing commands — in a way that few if any eastern bishops have ever done — not only to his ecclesiastical subordinates but to secular rulers as well. The western Church became centralized to a degree unknown anywhere in the four Patriarchates of the east (except possibly in Egypt). Monarchy in the west; in the east collegiality.

Nor was this the only effect which the barbarian invasions had upon the life of the Church. In Byzantium there were many educated laymen who took an active interest in theology. The “lay theologian” has always been an accepted figure in Orthodoxy: some of the most learned Byzantine Patriarchs — Photius, for example — were laymen before their appointment to the Patriarchate. But in the west the only effective education which survived through the Dark Ages was provided by the Church for its clergy. Theology became the preserve of the priests, since most of the laity could not even read, much less comprehend the technicalities of theological discussion. Orthodoxy, while assigning to the episcopate a special teaching office, has never known this sharp division between clergy and laity which arose in the western Middle Ages.

Relations between eastern and western Christendom were also made more difficult by the lack of a common language. Because the two sides could no longer communicate easily with one another, and each could no longer read what the other wrote, theological misunderstandings arose more easily; and these were often made worse by mistranslation — at times, one fears, deliberate and malicious mistranslation.

East and west were becoming strangers to one another, and this was something from which both were likely to suffer. In the early Church there had been unity in the faith, but a diversity of theological schools. From the start Greeks and Latins had each approached the Christian Mystery in their own way. The Latin approach was more practical, the Greek more speculative; Latin thought was influenced by juridical ideas, by the concepts of Roman law, while the Greeks understood theology in the context of worship and in the light of the Holy Liturgy. When thinking about the Trinity, Latins started with the unity of the Godhead, Greeks with the threeness of the persons; when reflecting on the Crucifixion, Latins thought primarily of Christ the Victim, Greeks of Christ the Victor; Latins talked more of redemption, Greeks of deification; and so on. Like the schools of Antioch and Alexandria within the east, these two distinctive approaches were not in themselves contradictory; each served to supplement the other, and each had its place in the fullness of Catholic tradition. But now that the two sides were becoming strangers to one another — with no political and little cultural unity, with no common language — there was a danger that each side would follow its own approach in isolation and push it to extremes, forgetting the value in the opposite point of view.

We have spoken of the different doctrinal approaches in east and west; but there were two points of doctrine where the two sides no longer supplemented one another, but entered into direct conflict — the Papal claims and the *filioque*. The factors which we have mentioned in previous paragraphs were sufficient in themselves to place a serious strain upon the unity of Christendom. Yet for all that, unity might still have been maintained, had there not been these two further points of difficulty. To them we must now turn. It was not until the middle of the ninth century that the full extent of the disagreement first came properly into the open, but the two differences themselves date back considerably earlier.

We have already had occasion to mention the Papacy when speaking of the different political situations in east and west; and we have seen how the centralized and monarchical structure of the western Church was reinforced by the barbarian invasions. Now so long as the Pope claimed an absolute power only in the west, Byzantium raised no objections. The Byzantines did not mind if the western Church was centralized, so long as the Papacy did not interfere in the east. The Pope, however, believed his immediate power of jurisdiction to extend to the east as well as to the west; and as soon as he tried to enforce this claim within the eastern Patriarchates, trouble was bound to arise. The Greeks assigned to the Pope a primacy of honor, but not the universal supremacy which he regarded as his due. The Pope viewed infallibility as his own pre-

rogative, the Greeks held that in matters of the faith the final decision rested not with the Pope alone, but with a Council representing *all* the bishops of the Church. Here we have two different conceptions of the visible organization of the Church.

The Orthodox attitude to the Papacy is admirably expressed by a twelfth-century writer, Nicetas, Archbishop of Nicomedia:

My dearest brother, we do not deny to the Roman Church the primacy amongst the five sister Patriarchates; and we recognize her right to the most honorable seat at an Ecumenical Council. But she has separated herself from us by her own deeds, when through pride she assumed a monarchy which does not belong to her office... How shall we accept decrees from her that have been issued without consulting us and even without our knowledge? If the Roman Pontiff, seated on the lofty throne of his glory, wishes to thunder at us and, so to speak, hurl his mandates at us from on high, and if he wishes to judge us and even to rule us and our Churches, not by taking counsel with us but at his own arbitrary pleasure, what kind of brotherhood, or even what kind of parenthood can this be? We should be the slaves, not the sons, of such a Church, and the Roman See would not be the pious mother of sons but a hard and imperious mistress of slaves (Quoted in S. Runciman, *The Eastern Schism*, p. 116).

That was how an Orthodox felt in the twelfth century, when the whole question had come out into the open. In earlier centuries the Greek attitude to the Papacy was basically the same, although not yet sharpened by controversy. Up to 850, Rome and the east avoided an open conflict over the Papal claims, but the divergence of views was not the less serious for being partially concealed.

The second great difficulty was the *filioque*. The dispute involved the words about the Holy Spirit in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed. Originally the Creed ran: "I believe... in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of Life, *who proceeds from the Father*, who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and together glorified." This, the original form, is recited unchanged by the east to this day. But the west inserted an extra phrase "and from the Son" (in Latin, *filioque*), so that the Creed now reads "who proceeds from the Father *and the Son*." It is not certain when and where this addition was first made, but it seems to have originated in Spain, as a safeguard against Arianism. At any rate the Spanish Church interpolated the *filioque* at the third Council of Toledo (589), if not before. From Spain the addition spread to France and thence to Germany, where it was welcomed by Charlemagne and adopted at the semi-Iconoclast Council of Frankfort (794). It was writers at Charlemagne's Court who first made the *filioque* into an issue of controversy, accusing the Greeks of heresy because they recited the Creed in its original form. But Rome, with typical conservatism, continued to use the Creed without the *filioque* until the start of the eleventh century. In 808 Pope Leo III wrote in a letter to Charlemagne that, although he himself believed the *filioque* to be doctrinally sound, yet he considered it a mistake to tamper with the wording of the Creed. Leo deliberately had the Creed, without the *filioque*, inscribed on silver plaques and set up in Saint Peter's. For the time being Rome acted as mediator between Germany and Byzantium.

It was not until after 850 that the Greeks paid much attention to the *filioque*, but once they did so, their reaction was sharply critical. Orthodoxy objected (and still objects) to this addition in the Creed, for two reasons. First, the Ecumenical Councils specifically forbade any changes to be introduced into the Creed; and if an addition has to be made, certainly nothing short of an-

other Ecumenical Council is competent to make it. The Creed is the common possession of the whole Church, and a part of the Church has no right to tamper with it. The west, in arbitrarily altering the Creed without consulting the east, is guilty (as Khomiakov put it) of moral fratricide, of a sin against the unity of the Church. In the second place, Orthodox believe the *filioque* to be theologically untrue. They hold that the Spirit proceeds from the Father alone, and consider it a heresy to say that He proceeds from the Son as well. It may seem to many that the point at issue is so abstruse as to be unimportant. But Orthodox would say that since the doctrine of the Trinity stands at the heart of the Christian faith, a small change of emphasis in Trinitarian theology has far-reaching consequences in many other fields. Not only does the *filioque* destroy the balance between the three persons of the Holy Trinity: it leads also to a false understanding of the work of the Spirit in the world, and so encourages a false doctrine of the Church. (I have given here the standard Orthodox view of the *filioque*; it should be noted, however, that certain Orthodox theologians consider the *filioque* merely an unauthorized addition to the Creed, not necessarily heretical in itself.)

Besides these two major issues, the Papacy and the *filioque*, there were certain lesser matters of Church worship and discipline which caused trouble between east and west: the Greeks allowed married clergy, the Latins insisted on priestly celibacy; the two sides had different rules of fasting; the Greeks used leavened bread in the Eucharist, the Latins unleavened bread or “azymes.”

Around 850 east and west were still in full communion with one another and still formed one Church. Cultural and political divisions had combined to bring about an increasing estrangement, but there was no open schism. The two sides had different conceptions of Papal authority and recited the Creed in different forms, but these questions had not yet been brought fully into the open.

But in 1190 Theodore Balsamon, Patriarch of Antioch and a great authority on Canon Law, looked at matters very differently:

For many years [he does not say how many] 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 (Quoted in Runciman, *The Eastern Schism*, p. 139).

In Balsamon’s eyes, communion had been broken; there was a definite schism between east and west. The two no longer formed one visible Church.

In this transition from estrangement to schism, four incidents are of particular importance: the quarrel between Photius and Pope Nicholas I (usually known as the “Photian schism”: the east would prefer to call it the schism of Nicholas); the incident of the Diptychs in 1009; the attempt at reconciliation in 1053-1054 and its disastrous sequel; and the Crusades.

### **From estrangement to schism: 858-1204**

In 858, fifteen years after the triumph of icons under Theodora, a new Patriarch of Constantinople was appointed — Photius, known to the Orthodox Church as Saint Photius the Great. He has been termed “the most distinguished thinker, the most outstanding politician, and the most skilful diplomat ever to hold office as Patriarch of Constantinople” (G. Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State*, p. 199). Soon after his accession he became involved in a dispute with Pope Nicho-

las I (858-867). The previous Patriarch, Saint Ignatius, had been exiled by the Emperor and while in exile had resigned under pressure. The supporters of Ignatius, declining to regard this resignation as valid, considered Photius a usurper. When Photius sent a letter to the Pope announcing his accession, Nicholas decided that before recognizing Photius he would look further into the quarrel between the new Patriarch and the Ignatian party. Accordingly in 861 he sent legates to Constantinople.

Photius had no desire to start a dispute with the Papacy. He treated the legates with great deference, inviting them to preside at a council in Constantinople, which was to settle the issue between Ignatius and himself. The legates agreed, and together with the rest of the council they decided that Photius was the legitimate Patriarch. But when his legates returned to Rome, Nicholas declared that they had exceeded their powers, and he disowned their decision. He then proceeded to retry the case himself at Rome: a council held under his presidency in 863 recognized Ignatius as Patriarch, and proclaimed Photius to be deposed from all priestly dignity. The Byzantines took no notice of this condemnation, and sent no answers to the Pope's letters. Thus an open breach existed between the Churches of Rome and Constantinople.

The dispute clearly involved the Papal claims. Nicholas was a great reforming Pope, with an exalted idea of the prerogatives of his see, and he had already done much to establish an absolute power over all bishops in the west. But he believed this absolute power to extend to the east also: as he put it in a letter of 865, the Pope is endowed with authority "over all the earth, that is, over every Church." This was precisely what the Byzantines were not prepared to grant. Confronted with the dispute between Photius and Ignatius, Nicholas thought that he saw a golden opportunity to enforce his claim to universal jurisdiction: he would make both parties submit to his arbitration. But he realized that Photius had submitted *voluntarily* to the inquiry by the Papal legates, and that his action could not be taken as a recognition of Papal supremacy. This (among other reasons) was why Nicholas had cancelled his legates' decisions. The Byzantines for their part were willing to allow appeals to Rome, but only under the specific conditions laid down in Canon III of the Council of Sardica (343). This Canon states that a bishop, if under sentence of condemnation, can appeal to Rome, and the Pope, if he sees cause, can order a retrial; this retrial, however, is not to be conducted by the Pope himself at Rome, but by the bishops of the provinces adjacent to that of the condemned bishop. Nicholas, so the Byzantines felt, in reversing the decisions of his legates and demanding a retrial at Rome itself, was going far beyond the terms of this Canon. They regarded his behavior as an unwarrantable and uncanonical interference in the affairs of another Patriarchate.

Soon not only the Papal claims but the *filioque* became involved in the dispute. Byzantium and the west (chiefly the Germans) were both launching great missionary offensives among the Slavs (see pages 82-84). The two lines of missionary advance, from the east and from the west, soon converged; and when Greek and German missionaries found themselves at work in the same land, it was difficult to avoid a conflict, since the two missions were run on widely different principles. The clash naturally brought to the fore the question of the *filioque*, used by the Germans in the Creed, but not used by the Greeks. The chief point of trouble was Bulgaria, a country which Rome and Constantinople alike were anxious to add to their sphere of jurisdiction. The Khan Boris was at first inclined to ask the German missionaries for baptism: threatened, however, with a Byzantine invasion, he changed his policy and around 865 accepted baptism from Greek clergy. But Boris wanted the Church in Bulgaria to be independent, and when Constantinople refused to grant autonomy, he turned to the west in hope of better terms. Given a fret hand in Bulgaria, the Latin missionaries promptly launched a violent attack on the Greeks, singling out

the points where Byzantine practice differed from their own: married clergy, rules of fasting, and above all the *filioque*. At Rome itself the *filioque* was still not in use, but Nicholas gave full support to the Germans when they insisted upon its insertion in Bulgaria. The Papacy, which in 808 had mediated between the Germans and the Greeks, was now neutral no longer.

Photius was naturally alarmed by the extension of German influence in the Balkans, on the very borders of the Byzantine Empire; but he was much more alarmed by the question of the *filioque*, now brought forcibly to his attention. In 867 he took action. He wrote an Encyclical Letter to the other Patriarchs of the east, denouncing the *filioque* at length and charging those who used it with heresy. Photius has often been blamed for writing this letter: even the great Roman Catholic historian Francis Dvornik, who is in general highly sympathetic to Photius, calls his action on this occasion a “futile attack,” and says “the lapse was inconsiderate, hasty, and big with fatal consequences” (F. Dvornik, *The Photian Schism*, p. 433). But if Photius really considered the *filioque* heretical, what else could he do except speak his mind? It must also be remembered that it was not Photius who first made the *filioque* a matter of controversy, but Charlemagne and his scholars seventy years before: the west was the original aggressor, not the east. Photius followed up his letter by summoning a council to Constantinople, which declared Pope Nicholas excommunicate, terming him “a heretic who ravages the vineyard of the Lord.”

At this critical point in the dispute, the whole situation suddenly changed. In this same year (867) Photius was deposed from the Patriarchate by the Emperor. Ignatius became Patriarch once more, and communion with Rome was restored. In 869-870 another Council was held at Constantinople, known as the “Anti-Photian Council,” which condemned and anathematized Photius, reversing the decisions of 867. This Council, later reckoned in the west as the eighth Ecumenical Council, opened with the unimpressive total of 12 bishops, although numbers at subsequent sessions rose to 103.

But there were further changes to come. The 869-70 Council requested the Emperor to resolve the status of the Bulgarian Church, and not surprisingly he decided that it should be assigned to the Patriarchate of Constantinople. Realizing that Rome would allow him less independence than Byzantium, Boris accepted this decision. From 870, then, the German missionaries were expelled and the *filioque* was heard no more in the confines of Bulgaria. Nor was this all. At Constantinople, Ignatius and Photius were reconciled to one another, and when Ignatius died in 877, Photius once more succeeded him as Patriarch. In 879 yet another council was held in Constantinople, attended by 383 bishops — a notable contrast with the meager total at the anti-Photian gathering ten years previously. The Council of 869 was anathematized and all condemnations of Photius were withdrawn; these decisions were accepted without protest at Rome. So Photius ended victorious, recognized by Rome and ecclesiastically master of Bulgaria. Until recently it was thought that there was a second “Photian schism,” but Dr. Dvornik has proved with devastating conclusiveness that this second schism is a myth: in Photius’ later period of office (877-886) communion between Constantinople and the Papacy remained unbroken. The Pope at this time, John VIII (871-882), was no friend to the Germans and did not press the question of the *filioque*, nor did he attempt to enforce the Papal claims in the east. Perhaps he recognized how seriously the policy of Nicholas had endangered the unity of Christendom.

Thus the schism was outwardly healed, but no real solution had been reached concerning the two great points of difference which the dispute between Nicholas and Photius had forced into the open. Matters had been patched up, and that was all.

Photius, always honored in the east as a saint, a leader of the Church, and a theologian, has in the past been regarded by the west with less enthusiasm, as the author of a schism and little

else. His good qualities are now more widely appreciated. "If I am right in my conclusions," so Dr. Dvornik ends his monumental study, "we shall be free once more to recognize in Photius a great Churchman, a learned humanist, and a genuine Christian, generous enough to forgive his enemies, and to take the first step towards reconciliation" (*The Photian Schism*, p. 432). In the general historical reappraisal of the schism by recent writers, nowhere has the change been so startling as in the verdict on Saint Photius.

At the beginning of the eleventh century there was fresh trouble over the *filioque*. The Papacy at last adopted the addition: at the coronation of Emperor Henry II at Rome in 1014, the Creed was sung in its interpolated form. Five years earlier, in 1009, the newly-elected Pope Sergius IV sent a letter to Constantinople which may have contained the *filioque*, although this is not certain. Whatever the reason, the Patriarch of Constantinople, also called Sergius, did not include the new Pope's name in the Diptychs: these are lists, kept by each Patriarch, which contain the names of the other Patriarchs, living and departed, whom he recognizes as orthodox. The Diptychs are a visible sign of the unity of the Church, and deliberately to omit a man's name from them is tantamount to a declaration that one is not in communion with him. After 1009 the Pope's name did not appear again in the Diptychs of Constantinople; technically, therefore, the Churches of Rome and Constantinople were out of communion from that date. But it would be unwise to press this technicality too far. Diptychs were frequently incomplete, and so do not form an infallible guide to Church relations. The Constantinopolitan lists before 1009 often lacked the Pope's name, simply because new Popes at their accession failed to notify the east. The omission in 1009 aroused no comment at Rome, and even at Constantinople men quickly forgot why and when the Pope's name had first been dropped from the Diptychs.

As the eleventh century proceeded, new factors brought relations between the Papacy and the eastern Patriarchates to a further crisis. The previous century had been a period of grave instability and confusion for the see of Rome, a century which Cardinal Baronius justly termed an age of iron and lead in the history of the Papacy. But Rome now reformed itself, and under the rule of men such as Hildebrand (Pope Gregory VII) it gained a position of power in the west such as it had never before achieved. The reformed Papacy naturally revived the claims to universal jurisdiction which Nicholas had made. The Byzantines on their side had grown accustomed to dealing with a Papacy that was for the most part weak and disorganized, and so they found it difficult to adapt themselves to the new situation. Matters were made worse by political factors, such as the military aggression of the Normans in Byzantine Italy, and the commercial aggression of the Italian maritime cities in the eastern Mediterranean during the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

In 1054 there was a severe quarrel. The Normans had been forcing the Greeks in Byzantine Italy to conform to Latin usages; the Patriarch of Constantinople, Michael Cerularius, in return demanded that the Latin churches at Constantinople should adopt Greek practices, and in 1052, when they refused, he closed them. This was perhaps harsh, but as Patriarch he was fully entitled to act in this manner. Among the practices to which Michael and his supporters particularly objected was the Latin use of "azymes" or unleavened bread in the Eucharist, an issue which had not figured in the dispute of the ninth century. In 1053, however, Cerularius took up a more conciliatory attitude and wrote to Pope Leo IX, offering to restore the Pope's name to the Diptychs. In response to this offer, and to settle the disputed questions of Greek and Latin usages, Leo in 1054 sent three legates to Constantinople, the chief of them being Humbert, Bishop of Silva Candida. The choice of Cardinal Humbert was unfortunate, for both he and Cerularius were men of stiff and intransigent temper, whose mutual encounter was not likely to promote good will

among Christians. The legates, when they called on Cerularius, did not create a favorable impression. Thrusting a letter from the Pope at him, they retired without giving the usual salutations; the letter itself, although signed by Leo, had in fact been drafted by Humbert, and was distinctly unfriendly in tone. After this the Patriarch refused to have further dealings with the legates. Eventually Humbert lost patience, and laid a Bull of Excommunication against Cerularius on the altar of the Church of the Holy Wisdom: among other ill-founded charges in this document, Humbert accused the Greeks of *omitting the filioque* from the Creed! Humbert promptly left Constantinople without offering any further explanation of his act, and on returning to Italy he represented the whole incident as a great victory for the see of Rome. Cerularius and his synod retaliated by anathematizing Humbert (but not the Roman Church as such). The attempt at reconciliation left matters worse than before.

But even after 1054 friendly relations between east and west continued. The two parts of Christendom were not yet conscious of a great gulf of separation between them, and men on both sides still hoped that the misunderstandings could be cleared up without too much difficulty. The dispute remained something of which ordinary Christians in east and west were largely unaware. It was the Crusades which made the schism definitive: they introduced a new spirit of hatred and bitterness, and they brought the whole issue down to the popular level.

From the military point of view, however, the Crusades began with great *éclat*. Antioch was captured from the Turks in 1098, Jerusalem in 1099: the first Crusade was a brilliant, if bloody, success ("In the Temple and the porch of Solomon," wrote Raymond of Argiles, "men rode in blood up to their knees and bridle reins.... The city was filled with corpses and blood" [Quoted in A. C. Krey, *The First Crusade*, Princeton, 1921, p. 261]). Both at Antioch and Jerusalem the Crusaders proceeded to set up Latin Patriarchs. At Jerusalem this was reasonable, since the see was vacant at the time; and although in the years that followed there existed a succession of Greek Patriarchs of Jerusalem, living exiled in Cyprus, yet within Palestine itself the whole population, Greek as well as Latin, at first accepted the Latin Patriarch as their head. A Russian pilgrim at Jerusalem in 1106-1107, Abbot Daniel of Tchernigov, found Greeks and Latins worshipping together in harmony at the Holy Places, though he noted with satisfaction that at the ceremony of the Holy Fire the Greek lamps were lit miraculously while the Latin had to be lit from the Greek. But at Antioch the Crusaders found a Greek Patriarch actually in residence: shortly afterwards, it is true, he withdrew to Constantinople, but the local Greek population was unwilling to recognize the Latin Patriarch whom the Crusaders set up in his place. Thus from 1100 there existed in effect a local schism at Antioch. After 1187, when Saladin captured Jerusalem, the situation in the Holy Land deteriorated: two rivals, resident within Palestine itself, now divided the Christian population between them — a Latin Patriarch at Acre, a Greek at Jerusalem. These local schisms at Antioch and Jerusalem were a sinister development. Rome was very far away, and if Rome and Constantinople quarreled, what practical difference did it make to the average Christian in Syria or Palestine? But when two rival bishops claimed the same throne and two hostile congregations existed in the same city, the schism became an immediate reality in which simple believers were directly involved.

But worse was to follow in 1204, with the taking of Constantinople during the Fourth Crusade. The Crusaders were originally bound for Egypt, but were persuaded by Alexius, son of Isaac Angelus, the dispossessed Emperor of Byzantium, to turn aside to Constantinople in order to restore him and his father to the throne. This western intervention in Byzantine politics did not go happily, and eventually the Crusaders, disgusted by what they regarded as Greek duplicity, lost patience and sacked the city. Eastern Christendom has never forgotten those three appalling days of pillage. "Even the Saracens are merciful and kind," protested Nicetas Choniates, "com-

pared with these men who bear the Cross of Christ on their shoulders.” What shocked the Greeks more than anything was the wanton and systematic sacrilege of the Crusaders. How could men who had specially dedicated themselves to God’s service treat the things of God in such a way? As the Byzantines watched the Crusaders tear to pieces the altar and icon screen in the Church of the Holy Wisdom, and set prostitutes on the Patriarch’s throne, they must have felt that those who did such things were not Christians in the same sense as themselves.

*Constantinopolitana civitas diu profana* — “City of Constantinople, so long ungodly”: so sang the French Crusaders of Angers, as they carried home the relics which they had stolen. Can we wonder if the Greeks after 1204 also looked on the Latins as *profani*? Christians in the west still do not realize how deep is the disgust and how lasting the horror with which Orthodox regard actions such as the sack of Constantinople by the Crusaders.

“The Crusaders brought not peace but a sword; and the sword was to sever Christendom” (S. Runciman, *The Eastern Schism*, p. 101). The long-standing doctrinal disagreements were now reinforced on the Greek side by an intense national hatred, by a feeling of resentment and indignation against western aggression and sacrilege. After 1204 there can be no doubt that Christian east and Christian west were divided into two.

In recounting the history of the schism recent writers have rightly emphasized the importance of “non-theological factors.” But vital dogmatic issues were also involved. When full allowance has been made for all the cultural and political difficulties, it still remains true that in the end it was differences of doctrine — the *filioque* and the Papal claims — which brought about the separation between Rome and the Orthodox Church, just as it is differences of doctrine which still prevent their reconciliation. The schism was for both parties “a spiritual commitment, a conscious taking of sides in a matter of faith” (Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, p. 13).

Orthodoxy and Rome each believes itself to have been right and its opponent wrong upon these points of doctrine; and so Rome and Orthodoxy since the schism have each claimed to be the true Church. Yet each, while believing in the rightness of its own cause, must look back at the past with sorrow and repentance. Both sides must in honesty acknowledge that they could and should have done more to prevent the schism. Both sides were guilty of mistakes on the human level. Orthodox, for example, must blame themselves for the pride and contempt with which during the Byzantine period they regarded the west; they must blame themselves for incidents such as the riot of 1182, when many Latin residents at Constantinople were massacred by the Byzantine populace. (None the less there is no action on the Byzantine side which can be compared to the sack of 1204). And each side, while claiming to be the one true Church, must admit that on the human level it has been grievously impoverished by the, separation. The Greek east and the Latin west needed and still need one another. For both parties the great schism has proved a great tragedy.

## **Two attempts at reunion; the hesychast controversy**

In 1204 the Crusaders set up a short-lived Latin kingdom at Constantinople, which came to an end in 1261 when the Greeks recovered their capital. Byzantium survived for two centuries more, and these years proved a time of great cultural, artistic, and religious revival. But politically and economically the restored Byzantine Empire was in a precarious state, and found itself more and more helpless in the face of the Turkish armies which pressed upon it from the east.

Two important attempts were made to secure reunion between the Christian east and west, the first in the thirteenth and the second in the fifteenth century. The moving spirit behind the

first attempt was Michael VIII (reigned 1259-1282), the Emperor who recovered Constantinople. While doubtless sincerely desiring Christian unity on religious grounds, his motive was also political: threatened by attacks from Charles of Anjou, sovereign of Sicily, he desperately needed the support and protection of the Papacy, which could best be secured through a union of the Churches. A reunion Council was held at Lyons in 1274. The Orthodox delegates who attended agreed to recognize the Papal claims and to recite the Creed with the *filioque*. But the union proved no more than an agreement on paper, since it was fiercely rejected by the overwhelming majority of clergy and laity in the Byzantine Church, as well as by Bulgaria and the other Orthodox countries. The general reaction to the Council of Lyons was summed up in words attributed to the Emperor's sister: "Better that my brother's Empire should perish, than the purity of the Orthodox faith." The union of Lyons was formally repudiated by Michael's successor, and Michael himself, for his "apostasy," was deprived of Christian burial.

Meanwhile east and west continued to grow further apart in their theology and in their whole manner of understanding the Christian life. Byzantium continued to live in a Patristic atmosphere, using the ideas and language of the Greek Fathers of the fourth century. But in western Europe the tradition of the Fathers was replaced by Scholasticism — that great synthesis of philosophy and theology worked out in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Western theologians now came to employ new categories of thought, a new theological method, and a new terminology which the east did not understand. To an ever-increasing extent the two sides were losing a common "universe of discourse."

Byzantium on its side also contributed to this process: here too there were theological developments in which the west had neither part nor share, although there was nothing so radical as the Scholastic revolution. These theological developments were connected chiefly with the *Hesychast Controversy*, a dispute which arose at Byzantium in the middle of the fourteenth century, and which involved the doctrine of God's nature and the methods of prayer used in the Orthodox Church.

To understand the Hesychast Controversy, we must turn back for the moment to the earlier history of eastern mystical theology. The main features of this mystical theology were worked out by Clement (died 215) and by Origen of Alexandria (died 253-254), whose ideas were developed in the fourth century by the Cappadocians, especially Gregory of Nyssa, and by their disciple Evagrius of Pontus (died 399), a monk in the Egyptian desert. There are two trends in this mystical theology, not exactly opposed, but certainly at first sight inconsistent: the "way of negation" and the "way of union." The way of negation — *apophatic theology*, as it is often called — speaks of God in negative terms. God cannot be properly apprehended by man's mind; human language, when applied to Him, is always inexact. It is therefore less misleading to use negative language about God rather than positive — to refuse to say what God is, and to state simply what He is not. As Gregory of Nyssa put it: "The true knowledge and vision of God consist in this — in seeing that He is invisible, because what we seek lies beyond all knowledge, being wholly separated by the darkness of incomprehensibility" (*The Life of Moses*, 2, 163 [77A]).

Negative theology reaches its classic expression in the so-called "Dionysian" writings. For many centuries these books were thought to be the work of Saint Dionysius the Areopagite, Paul's convert at Athens (Acts 17:34); but they are in fact by an unknown author, who probably lived towards the end of the fifth century and belonged to circles sympathetic to the Monophysites. Saint Maximus the Confessor (died 662) composed commentaries on the Dionysian writings, and so ensured for them a permanent place in Orthodox theology. Dionysius has also had a great influence on the west: it has been reckoned that he is quoted 1,760 times by Thomas

Aquinas in the *Summa*, while a fourteenth-century English chronicler records that the *Mystical Theology* of Dionysius “ran through England like the wild deer.” The apophatic language of Dionysius was repeated by many others. “God is infinite and incomprehensible,” wrote John of Damascus, “and all that is comprehensible about Him is His infinity and incomprehensibility.... God does not belong to the class of existing things: not that He has no existence, but that He is above all existing things, nay even above existence itself (*On the Orthodox Faith* 1, 4 [P.G. xciv, 800B]).

This emphasis on God’s transcendence would seem at first sight to exclude any direct experience of God. But in fact many of those who made greatest use of negative theology — Gregory of Nyssa, for example, or Dionysius, or Maximus — also believed in the possibility of a true mystical union with God; they combined the “way of negation” with the “way of union,” with the tradition of the mystics or *hesychasts*. (The name hesychast is derived from the Greek word *hesychia*, meaning “quiet.” A hesychast is one who in silence devotes himself to inner recollection and secret prayer). While using the apophatic language of negative theology, these writers claimed an immediate experience of the unknowable God, a personal union with Him who is unapproachable. How were the two “ways” to be reconciled? How can God be both knowable and unknowable at once?

This was one of the questions which was posed in an acute form in the fourteenth century. Connected with it was another, the question of the body and its place in prayer. Evagrius, like Origen, sometimes borrowed too heavily from Platonism: he wrote of prayer in intellectual terms, as an activity of the mind rather than of the whole man, and he seemed to allow no positive role to man’s body in the process of redemption and deification. But the balance between mind and body is redressed in another ascetic writing, the Macarian Homilies. (These were traditionally attributed to Saint Macarius of Egypt [300?-390], but it is now thought that they were written in Syria during the late fourth or the beginning of the fifth century). The Macarian Homilies revert to a more Biblical idea of man — not a soul imprisoned in a body (as in Greek thought), but a single and united whole, soul and body together. Where Evagrius speaks of the *mind*, Macarius uses the Hebraic idea of the heart. The change of emphasis is significant, for the heart includes the whole man — not only intellect, but will, emotions, and even body.

Using “heart” in this Macarian sense, Orthodox often talk about “Prayer of the Heart.” What does the phrase mean? When a man begins to pray, at first he prays with the lips, and has to make a conscious intellectual effort in order to realize the meaning of what he says. But if he perseveres, praying continually with recollection, his intellect and his heart become united; he “finds the place of the heart,” his spirit acquires the power of “dwelling in the heart,” and so his prayer becomes “prayer of the heart.” It becomes something not merely said by the lips, not merely thought by the intellect, but offered spontaneously by the whole being of man — lips, intellect, emotions, will, and body. The prayer fills the entire consciousness, and no longer has to be forced out, but says itself. This Prayer of the Heart cannot be attained simply through our own efforts, but is a gift conferred by the grace of God.

When Orthodox writers use the term “Prayer of the Heart,” they usually have in mind one particular prayer, the Jesus Prayer. Among Greek spiritual writers, first Diadochus of Photice (mid-fifth century) and later Saint John Climacus of Mount Sinai (579?-649?) recommended, as a specially valuable form of prayer, the constant repetition or remembrance of the name “Jesus.” In course of time the Invocation of the Name became crystallized into a short sentence, known as the Jesus Prayer: “*Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me*” (In modern Orthodox practice the Prayer sometimes ends, “...have mercy on me *a sinner*”). By the thirteenth century (if not before), the recitation of the Jesus Prayer had become linked to certain physical exercises, designed to assist

concentration. Breathing was carefully regulated in time with the Prayer, and a particular bodily posture was recommended: head bowed, chin resting on the chest, eyes fixed on the place of the heart. (There are interesting parallels between the Hesychast “method” and Hindu *Yoga* or Mohammedan *Dhikr*; but the points of similarity must not be pressed too far). This is often called “the Hesychast method of prayer,” but it should not be thought that for the Hesychasts these exercises constituted the essence of prayer. They were regarded, not as an end in themselves, but as a help to concentration — as an accessory useful to some, but not obligatory upon all. The Hesychasts knew that there can be no mechanical means of acquiring God’s grace, and no techniques leading automatically to the mystical state.

For the Hesychasts of Byzantium, the culmination of mystical experience was the vision of Divine and Uncreated Light. The works of Saint Symeon the New Theologian (949-1022), the greatest of the Byzantine mystics, are full of this “Light mysticism.” When he writes of his own experiences, he speaks again and again of the Divine Light: “fire truly divine,” he calls it, “fire uncreated and invisible, without beginning and immaterial.” The Hesychasts believed that this light which they experienced was identical with the Uncreated Light which the three disciples saw surrounding Jesus at His Transfiguration on Mount Thabor. But how was this vision of Divine Light to be reconciled with the apophatic doctrine of God the transcendent and unapproachable?

All these questions concerning the transcendence of God, the role of the body in prayer, and the Divine Light came to a head in the middle of the fourteenth century. The Hesychasts were violently attacked by a learned Greek from Italy, Barlaam the Calabrian, who stated the doctrine of God’s “otherness” and unknowability in an extreme form. It is sometimes suggested that Barlaam was influenced here by the Nominalist philosophy that was current in the west at this date; but more probably he derived his teaching from Greek sources. Starting from a one-sided exegesis of Dionysius, he argued that God can only be known *indirectly*; Hesychasm (so he maintained) was wrong to speak of an immediate experience of God, for any such experience is impossible. Seizing on the bodily exercises which the Hesychasts employed, Barlaam accused them of holding a grossly materialistic conception of prayer. He was also scandalized by their claim to attain a vision of the Divine and Uncreated Light: here again he charged them with falling into a gross materialism. How can a man see God’s essence with his bodily eyes? The light which the Hesychasts beheld, in his view, was not the eternal light of the Divinity, but a temporary and created light.

The defense of the Hesychasts was taken up by Saint Gregory Palamas (1296-1359), Archbishop of Thessalonica. He upheld a doctrine of man which allowed for the use of bodily exercises in prayer, and he argued, against Barlaam, that the Hesychasts did indeed experience the Divine and Uncreated Light of Thabor. To explain how this was possible, Gregory developed the distinction between the essence and the energies of God. It was Gregory’s achievement to set Hesychasm on a firm dogmatic basis, by integrating it into Orthodox theology as a whole, and by showing how the Hesychast vision of Divine Light in no way undermined the apophatic doctrine of God. His teaching was confirmed by two councils held at Constantinople in 1341 and 1351, which, although local and not Ecumenical, yet possess a doctrinal authority in Orthodox theology scarcely inferior to the Seven General Councils themselves. But western Christendom has never officially recognized these two councils, although many western Christians personally accept the theology of Palamas.

Gregory began by reaffirming the Biblical doctrine of man and of the Incarnation. Man is a single, united whole: not only man’s mind but the *whole* man was created in the image of God

(P.G. cl, 1361c). Man's body is not an enemy, but partner and collaborator with his soul. Christ, by taking a human body at the Incarnation, has "made the *flesh* an inexhaustible source of sanctification" (Homily 16 [P.G. cli, 193B]). Here Gregory took up and developed the ideas implicit in earlier writings, such as the Macarian Homilies; the same emphasis on man's body, as we have seen, lies behind the Orthodox doctrine of icons. Gregory went on to apply this doctrine of man to the Hesychast methods of prayer: the Hesychasts, so he argued, in placing such emphasis on the part of the body in prayer, are not guilty of a gross materialism but are simply remaining faithful to the Biblical doctrine of man as a unity. Christ took human flesh and saved the whole man; therefore it is the *whole* man — body and soul together — that prays to God.

From this Gregory turned to the main problem: how to combine the two affirmations, that man knows God and that God is by nature unknowable. Gregory answered: we know the energies of God, but not His *essence*. This distinction between God's essence (*ousia*) and His energies goes back to the Cappadocian Fathers. "We know our God from His energies," wrote Saint Basil, "but we do not claim that we can draw near to His essence. For His energies come down to us, but His essence remains unapproachable" (Letter 234, 1). Gregory accepted this distinction. He affirmed, as emphatically as any exponent of negative theology, that God is in essence absolutely unknowable. "God is not a nature," he wrote, "for He is above all nature; He is not a being, for He is above all beings.... No single thing of all that is created has or ever will have even the slightest communion with the supreme nature, or nearness to it" (P.G. cl, 1176c). But however remote from us in His essence, yet in His energies God has revealed Himself to men. These energies are not something that exists apart from God, not a gift which God confers upon men: they are God Himself in His action and revelation to the world. God exists complete and entire in each of His divine energies. The world, as Gerard Manley Hopkins said, is charged with the grandeur of God; all creation is a gigantic Burning Bush, permeated but not consumed by the ineffable and wondrous fire of God's energies. (Compare Maximus, *Ambigua*, P.G. xci, 1148D).

It is through these energies that God enters into a direct and immediate relationship with mankind. In relation to man, the divine energy is in fact nothing else than the *grace of God*; grace is not just a "gift" of God, not just an object which God bestows on men, but a direct manifestation of the living God Himself, a personal confrontation between creature and Creator. "Grace signifies all the abundance of the divine nature, in so far as it is communicated to men" (V. Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, p. 162). When we say that the saints have been transformed or "deified" by the grace of God, what we mean is that they have a direct experience of God Himself. They *know* God — that is to say, God in His energies, not in His essence.

God is Light, and therefore the experience of God's energies takes the form of Light. The vision which the Hesychasts receive is (so Palamas argued) not a vision of some created light, but of the Light of the Godhead Itself — the same Light of the Godhead which surrounded Christ on Mount Thabor. This Light is not a sensible or material light, but it can be seen with physical eyes (as by the disciples at the Transfiguration), since when a man is deified, his bodily faculties as well as his soul are transformed. The Hesychasts' vision of Light is therefore a true vision of God in His divine energies; and they are quite correct in identifying it with the Uncreated Light of Thabor.

Palamas, therefore, preserved God's transcendence and avoided the pantheism to which an unguarded mysticism easily leads; yet he allowed for God's immanence, for His continual presence in the world. God remains "the Wholly Other," and yet through His energies (which are God Himself) He enters into an immediate relationship with the world. God is a living God, the God of history, the God of the Bible, who became Incarnate in Christ. Barlaam, in excluding all

direct knowledge of God and in asserting that the Divine Light is something created, set too wide a gulf between God and man. Gregory's fundamental concern in opposing Barlaam was therefore the same as that of Athanasius and the General Councils: to safeguard man's direct approach to God, to uphold man's full deification and entire redemption. That same doctrine of salvation which underlay the disputes about the Trinity, the Person of Christ, and the Holy Icons, lies also at the heart of the Hesychast controversy.

"Into the closed world of Byzantium," wrote Dom Gregory Dix, "no really fresh impulse ever came after the sixth century... Sleep began... in the ninth century, perhaps even earlier, in the sixth" (*The Shape of the Liturgy*, London, 1945, p. 548). The Byzantine controversies of the fourteenth century amply demonstrate the falsity of such an assertion. Certainly Gregory Palamas was no revolutionary innovator, but firmly rooted in the tradition of the past; yet he was a creative theologian of the first rank, and his work shows that Orthodox theology did not cease to be active after the eighth century and the seventh Ecumenical Council.

Among the contemporaries of Gregory Palamas was the lay theologian Nicholas Cabasilas, who was sympathetic to the Hesychasts, although not closely involved in the controversy. Cabasilas is the author of a *Commentary on the Divine Liturgy*, which has become the classic Orthodox work on this subject; he also wrote a treatise on the sacraments entitled *The Life in Jesus Christ*. The writings of Cabasilas are marked by two things in particular: a vivid sense of the person of Christ "the Saviour," who, as he puts it, "is closer to us than our own soul" (*P.G.* cl, 712A); and a constant emphasis upon the sacraments. For him the mystical life is essentially a life in Christ and a life in the sacraments. There is a danger that mysticism may become speculative and individualist — divorced from the historical revelation in Christ and from the corporate life of the Church with its sacraments; but the mysticism of Cabasilas is always Christocentric, sacramental, ecclesial. His work shows how closely mysticism and the sacramental life were linked together in Byzantine theology. Palamas and his circle did not regard mystical prayer as a means of bypassing the normal institutional life of the Church.

A second reunion Council was held at Florence in 1438-1439. The Emperor John VIII (reigned 1425-1448) attended in person, together with the Patriarch of Constantinople and a large delegation from the Byzantine Church, as well as representatives from the other Orthodox Churches. There were prolonged discussions, and a genuine attempt was made by both sides to reach a true agreement on the great points of dispute. At the same time it was difficult for the Greeks to discuss theology dispassionately, for they knew that the political situation had now become desperate: the only hope of defeating the Turks lay in help from the west. Eventually a formula of union was drawn up, covering the *filioque*, Purgatory, azymes, and the Papal claims; and this was signed by all the Orthodox present at the Council except one — Mark, Archbishop of Ephesus, later canonized by the Orthodox Church. The Florentine Union was based on a two-fold principle: unanimity in matters of doctrine, respect for the legitimate rites and traditions peculiar to each Church. Thus in matters of doctrine, the Orthodox accepted the Papal claims (although here the wording of the formula of union was vague and ambiguous); they accepted the *filioque*; they accepted the Roman teaching on Purgatory (as a point of dispute between east and west, this only came into the open in the thirteenth century). But so far as "azymes" were concerned, no uniformity was demanded: Greeks were allowed to use leavened bread, while Latins were to continue to employ unleavened.

But the Union of Florence, though celebrated throughout western Europe — bells were rung in all the parish churches of England — proved no more of a reality in the east than its predeces-

sor at Lyons. John VIII and his successor Constantine XI, the last Emperor of Byzantium and the eightieth in succession since Constantine the Great, both remained loyal to the union; but they were powerless to enforce it on their subjects, and did not even dare to proclaim it publicly at Constantinople until 1452. Many of those who signed at Florence revoked their signatures when they reached home. The decrees of the Council were never accepted by more than a minute fraction of the Byzantine clergy and people. The Grand Duke Lucas Notaras, echoing the words of the Emperor's sister after Lyons, remarked: "I would rather see the Moslem turban in the midst of the city than the Latin miter."

John and Constantine had hoped that the Union of Florence would secure them military help from the west, but small indeed was the help which they actually received. On 7 April 1453 the Turks began to attack Constantinople by land and sea. Outnumbered by more than twenty to one, the Byzantines maintained a brilliant but hopeless defense for seven long weeks. In the early hours of 29 May the last Christian service was held in the great Church of the Holy Wisdom. It was a united service of Orthodox and Roman Catholics, for at this moment of crisis the supporters and opponents of the Florentine Union forgot their differences. The Emperor went out after receiving communion, and died fighting on the walls. Later the same day the city fell to the Turks, and the most glorious church in Christendom became a mosque.

It was the end of the Byzantine Empire. But it was not the end of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, far less the end of Orthodoxy.

## The Conversion of the Slavs

**T**he religion of grace spread over the earth and finally reached the Russian people. The gracious God who cared for all other countries now no longer neglects us. It is his desire to save us and lead us to reason" (Hilarion, Metropolitan of Russia, 1051-1054).

### Cyril and Methodius

For Constantinople the middle of the ninth century was a period of intensive missionary activity. The Byzantine Church, freed at last from the long struggle against the Iconoclasts, turned its energies to the conversion of the pagan Slavs who lay beyond the frontiers of the Empire, to the north and the northwest — Moravians, Bulgarians, Serbs, and Russians. Photius was the first Patriarch of Constantinople to initiate missionary work on a large scale among these Slavs. He selected for the task two brothers, Greeks from Thessalonica, Constantine (826-869) and Methodius (815?-885). In the Orthodox Church Constantine is usually called by the name Cyril which he took on becoming a monk. Known in earlier life as "Constantine the Philosopher," he was the ablest among the pupils of Photius, and was familiar with a wide range of languages, including Hebrew, Arabic, and even the Samaritan dialect. But the special qualification which he and his brother enjoyed was their knowledge of Slavonic: in childhood they had learnt the dialect of the Slavs around Thessalonica, and they could speak it fluently.

The first missionary journey of Cyril and Methodius was a short visit around 860 to the Khazars, who lived north of the Caucasus region. This expedition had no permanent results, and some years later the Khazars adopted Judaism. The brothers' real work began in 863 when they set out for Moravia (roughly equivalent to the modern Czechoslovakia). They went in answer to an appeal from the Prince of the land, Rostislav, who asked that Christian missionaries be sent,

capable of preaching to the people in their own tongue and of taking services in Slavonic. Slavonic services required a Slavonic Bible and Slavonic service books. Before they set out for Moravia the brothers had already set to work on this enormous task of translation. They had first to invent a suitable Slavonic alphabet. In their translation the brothers used the form of Slavonic familiar to them from childhood, the Macedonian dialect spoken by the Slavs around Thessalonica. In this way the dialect of the Macedonian Slavs became *Church Slavonic*, which remains to the present day the liturgical language of the Russian and certain other Slavonic Orthodox Churches.

One cannot overestimate the significance, for the future of Orthodoxy, of the Slavonic translations which Cyril and Methodius carried with them as they left Byzantium for the unknown north. Few events have been so important in the missionary history of the Church. From the start the Slav Christians enjoyed a precious privilege, such as none of the peoples of western Europe shared at this time: they heard the Gospel and the services of the Church in a tongue which they could understand. Unlike the Church of Rome in the west with its insistence on Latin, the Orthodox Church has never been rigid in the matter of languages; its normal policy is to hold services in the language of the people.

In Moravia, as in Bulgaria, the Greek mission soon clashed with German missionaries at work in the same area. The two missions not only depended on different Patriarchates, but worked on different principles. Cyril and Methodius used Slavonic in their services, the Germans Latin; Cyril and Methodius recited the Creed in its original form, the Germans inserted the *filioque*. To free his mission from German interference, Cyril decided to place it under the immediate protection of the Pope. Cyril's action in appealing to Rome shows that he did not take the quarrel between Photius and Nicholas too seriously; for him east and west were still united as one Church, and it was not a matter of primary importance whether he depended on Constantinople or Rome, so long as he could continue to use Slavonic in Church services. The brothers traveled to Rome in person in 868 and were entirely successful in the appeal. Hadrian II, Nicholas I's successor at Rome, received them favorably and gave full support to the Greek mission, confirming the use of Slavonic as the liturgical language of Moravia. He approved the brothers' translations, and laid copies of their Slavonic service books on the altars of the principal churches in the city.

Cyril died at Rome (869), but Methodius returned to Moravia. Sad to say, the Germans ignored the Pope's decision and obstructed Methodius in every possible way, even putting him in prison for more than a year. When Methodius died in 885, the Germans expelled his followers from the country, selling a number of them into slavery. Traces of the Slavonic mission lingered on in Moravia for two centuries more, but were eventually eradicated; and Christianity in its western form, with Latin culture and the Latin language (and of course the *filioque*), became universal. The attempt to found a Slavonic national Church in Moravia came to nothing. The work of Cyril and Methodius, so it seemed, had ended in failure.

Yet in fact this was not so. Other countries, where the brothers had not themselves preached, benefited from their work, most notably Bulgaria, Serbia, and Russia. Boris, Khan of Bulgaria, as we have seen, wavered for a time between east and west, but finally accepted the jurisdiction of Constantinople. The Byzantine missionaries in Bulgaria, however, lacking the vision of Cyril and Methodius, at first used Greek in Church services, a language as unintelligible as Latin to the ordinary Bulgar. But after their expulsion from Moravia, the disciples of Methodius turned naturally to Bulgaria, and here introduced the principles employed in the Moravian mission. Greek was replaced by Slavonic, and the Christian culture of Byzantium was presented

to the Bulgars in a Slavonic form which they could assimilate. The Bulgarian Church grew rapidly. Around 926, during the reign of Tsar Symeon the Great (reigned 893-927), an independent Bulgarian Patriarchate was created, and this was recognized by the Patriarchate of Constantinople in 927. The dream of Boris — an autocephalous Church of his own — became a reality within half a century of his death. Bulgaria was the first national Church of the Slavs.

Byzantine missionaries went likewise to Serbia, which accepted Christianity in the second half of the ninth century, around 867-874. Serbia also lay on the dividing line between eastern and western Christendom, but after a period of uncertainty it followed the example of Bulgaria, not of Moravia, and came under Constantinople. Here too the Slavonic service books were introduced and a Slavonic-Byzantine culture grew up. The Serbian Church gained a partial independence under Saint Sava (1176-1235), the greatest of Serbian national saints, who in 1219 was consecrated at Nicaea as Archbishop of Serbia. In 1346 a Serbian Patriarchate was created, which was recognized by the Church of Constantinople in 1375.

The conversion of Russia was also due indirectly to the work of Cyril and Methodius; but of this we shall speak further in the next section. With Bulgars, Serbs, and Russians as their “spiritual children,” the two Greeks from Thessalonica abundantly deserve their title, “Apostles of the Slavs.”

Another Orthodox nation in the Balkans, Romania, has a more complex history. The Romanians, though influenced by their Slav neighbors, are primarily Latin in language and ethnic character. Dacia, corresponding to part of modern Romania, was a Roman province during 106-271; but the Christian communities founded there in this period seem to have disappeared after the Romans withdrew. Part of the Romanian people was apparently converted to Christianity by the Bulgarians in the late ninth or early tenth century, but the full conversion of the two Romanian principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia did not occur until the fourteenth century. Those who think of Orthodoxy as being exclusively “eastern,” as Greek and Slav in character, should not overlook the fact that the Church of Romania, the second largest Orthodox Church today, is predominantly Latin.

Byzantium conferred two gifts upon the Slavs: a fully articulated system of Christian doctrine and a fully developed Christian civilization. When the conversion of the Slavs began in the ninth century, the great period of doctrinal controversies, the age of the Seven Councils, was at an end; the main outlines of the faith — the doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation — had already been worked out, and were delivered to the Slavs in their definitive form. Perhaps this is why the Slavonic Churches have produced few original theologians, while the religious disputes which have arisen in Slavonic lands have usually not been dogmatic in character. But this faith in the Trinity and the Incarnation did not exist in a vacuum; with it went a whole Christian culture and civilization, and this too the Greek missionaries brought with them from Byzantium. The Slavs were Christianized and civilized at the same time.

The Greeks communicated this faith and civilization not in an alien but in a Slavonic garb (here the translations of Cyril and Methodius were of capital importance); what the Slavs borrowed from Byzantium they were able to make their own. Byzantine culture and the Orthodox faith, if at first limited mainly to the ruling classes, became in time an integral part of the daily life of the Slavonic peoples as a whole. The link between Church and people was made even firmer by the system of creating independent national Churches.

Certainly this close identification of Orthodoxy with the life of the people, and in particular the system of national Churches, have had unfortunate consequences. Because Church and nation

were so closely associated, the Orthodox Slavs have often confused the two and have made the Church serve the ends of national politics; they have sometimes tended to think of their faith as primarily Serb, Russian, or Bulgar, and to forget that it is primarily Orthodox and Catholic. Nationalism has been the bane of Orthodoxy for the last ten centuries. Yet the integration of Church and people has in the end proved immensely beneficial. Christianity among the Slavs became in very truth the religion of the *whole* people, a *popular* religion in the best sense. In 1949 the Communists of Bulgaria published a law stating: "The Bulgarian Orthodox Church is in form, substance, and spirit a People's Democratic Church." Strip the words of their political associations, and behind them there lies an important truth.

### **The baptism of Russia: The Kiev period (988-1237).**

Photius also made plans to convert the Slavs of Russia. Around 864 he sent a bishop to Russia, but this first Christian foundation was exterminated by Oleg, who assumed power at Kiev (the chief Russian city at this time) in 878. Russia, however, continued to undergo a steady Christian infiltration from Byzantium, Bulgaria, and Scandinavia, and there was certainly a church at Kiev in 945. The Russian Princess Olga became Christian in 955, but her son Svyatoslav refused to follow her example, saying that his retinue would laugh at him if he received Christian baptism. But around 988 Olga's grandson Vladimir (reigned 980-1015) was converted to Christianity and married Anna, the sister of the Byzantine Emperor. Orthodoxy became the State religion of Russia, and such it remained until 1917. Vladimir set to in earnest to Christianize his realm: priests, relics, sacred vessels, and icons were imported; mass baptisms were held in the rivers; Church courts were set up, and ecclesiastical tithes instituted. The great idol of the god Perun, with its silver head and gold moustaches, was rolled ignominiously down from the hilltop above Kiev. "Angel's trumpet and Gospel's thunder sounded through all the towns. The air was sanctified by the incense that ascended towards God. Monasteries stood on the mountains. Men and women, small and great, all people filled the holy churches" (Quoted in G.P. Fedotov, *The Russian Religious Mind*, p. 410). So the Metropolitan Hilarion described the event sixty years afterwards, doubtless idealizing a little; for Kievan Russia was not at once completely converted to Christianity, and the Church was at first restricted mainly to the cities, while much of the countryside remained pagan until the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

Vladimir placed the same emphasis upon the social implications of Christianity as John the Almsgiver had done. Whenever he feasted with his Court, he distributed food to the poor and sick; nowhere else in medieval Europe were there such highly organized "social services" as in tenth-century Kiev. Other rulers in Kievan Russia followed Vladimir's example. Prince Vladimir Monomachos (reigned 1113-1125) wrote in his *Testament* to his sons: "Above all things forget not the poor, and support them to the extent of your means. Give to the orphan, protect the widow, and permit the mighty to destroy no man" (Quoted in G. Vernadsky, *Kievan Russia*, New Haven, 1948, p. 195) Vladimir was also deeply conscious of the Christian law of mercy, and when he introduced the Byzantine law code at Kiev, he insisted on mitigating its more savage and brutal features. There was no death penalty in Kievan Russia, no mutilation, no torture; corporal punishment was very little used. (In Byzantium the death penalty existed, but was hardly ever applied; the punishment of mutilation, however, was employed with distressing frequency).

The same gentleness can be seen in the story of Vladimir's two sons, Boris and Gleb. On Vladimir's death in 1015, their elder brother Svyatopolk attempted to seize their principalities. Taking literally the commands of the Gospel, they offered no resistance, although they could easily have done so; and each in turn was murdered by Svyatopolk's emissaries. If any blood were to be shed, Boris and Gleb preferred that it should be their own. Although they were not martyrs

for the faith, but victims in a political quarrel, they were both canonized, being given the special title of "Passion Bearers": it was felt that by their innocent and voluntary suffering they had shared in the Passion of Christ. Russians have always laid great emphasis on the place of suffering in the Christian life.

In Kievan Russia, as in Byzantium and the medieval west, monasteries played an important part. The most influential of them all was the *Petchersky Lavra*, the Monastery of the Caves at Kiev. Founded around 1051 by Saint Antony, a Russian who had lived on Mount Athos, it was reorganized by his successor Saint Theodosius (died 1074), who introduced there the rule of the monastery of the Studium at Constantinople. Like Vladimir, Theodosius was conscious of the social consequences of Christianity, and applied them in a radical fashion, identifying himself closely with the poor, much as Saint Francis of Assisi did in the west. Boris and Gleb followed Christ in his sacrificial death; Theodosius followed Christ in his life of poverty and voluntary "self-emptying." Of noble birth, he chose in childhood to wear coarse and patched garments and to work in the fields with the slaves. "Our Lord Jesus Christ," he said, "became poor and humbled Himself, offering Himself as an example, so that we should humble ourselves in His name. He suffered insults, was spat upon, and beaten, for our salvation; how just it is, then, that we should suffer in order to gain Christ" (Nestor, "Life of Saint Theodosius," in G.P. Fedotov, *A Treasury of Russian Spirituality*, p. 27). Even when Abbot he wore the meanest kind of clothing and rejected all outward signs of authority. Yet at the same time he was the honored friend and adviser of nobles and princes. The same ideal of humility is seen in others, for example Bishop Luke of Vladimir (died 1185) who, in the words of the *Vladimir Chronicle*, "bore upon himself the humiliation of Christ, not having a city here but seeking a future one." It is an ideal found often in Russian folklore, and in writers such as Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky.

Vladimir, Boris and Gleb, and Theodosius were all intensely concerned with the practical implications of the Gospel: Vladimir in his concern for social justice and his desire to treat criminals with mercy; Boris and Gleb in their resolution to follow Christ in His voluntary suffering and death; Theodosius in his self-identification with the humble. These four saints embody some of the most attractive features in Kievan Christianity.

The Russian Church during the Kievan period was subject to Constantinople, and until 1237 the Metropolitans of Russia were usually Greek. In memory of the days when the Metropolitan came from Byzantium, the Russian Church continues to sing in Greek the solemn greeting to a bishop, *eis polla eti, despota* ("unto many years, O master"). But of the rest of the bishops, about half were native Russians in the Kievan period; one was even a converted Jew, and another a Syrian.

Kiev enjoyed relations not only with Byzantium but with western Europe, and certain features in the organization of the early Russian Church, such as ecclesiastical tithes, were not Byzantine but western. Many western saints who do not appear in the Byzantine calendar were venerated at Kiev; a prayer to the Holy Trinity composed in Russia during the eleventh century lists English saints such as Alban and Botolph, and a French saint, Martin of Tours. Some writers have even argued that until 1054 Russian Christianity was as much Latin as Greek, but this is a great exaggeration. Russia was closer to the west in the Kiev period than at any other time until the reign of Peter the Great, but she owed immeasurably more to Byzantine than to Latin culture. Napoleon was correct historically when he called Emperor Alexander I of Russia "a Greek of the Lower Empire."

It has been said that it was Russia's greatest misfortune that she was allowed too little time to assimilate the full spiritual inheritance of Byzantium. In 1237 Kievan Russia was brought to a

sudden and violent end by the Mongol invasions; Kiev was sacked, and the whole Russian land was overrun, except the far north around Novgorod. A visitor to the Mongol Court in 1246 recorded that he saw in Russian territory neither town nor village, but only ruins and countless human skulls. But if Kiev was destroyed, the Christianity of Kiev remained a living memory:

Kievan Russia, like the golden days of childhood, was never dimmed in the memory of the Russian nation. In the pure fountain of her literary works anyone who wills can quench his religious thirst; in her venerable authors he can find his guide through the complexities of the modern world. Kievan Christianity has the same value for the Russian religious mind as Pushkin for the Russian artistic sense: that of a standard, a golden measure, a royal way (G.P. Fedotov, *The Russian Religious Mind*, p. 412).

### **The Russian Church under the Mongols (1237-1448).**

The suzerainty of the Mongol Tartars over Russia lasted from 1237 until 1480. But after the great battle of Kulikovo (1380), when the Russians dared at last to face their oppressors in an open fight and actually defeated them, Mongol overlordship was considerably weakened; by 1450 it had become largely nominal. More than anything else, it was the Church which kept alive Russian national consciousness in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, as the Church was later to preserve a sense of unity among the Greeks under Turkish rule. The Russia which emerged from the Mongol period was a Russia greatly changed in outward appearance. Kiev never recovered from the sack of 1237, and its place was taken in the fourteenth century by the Principality of Moscow. It was the Grand Dukes of Moscow who inspired the resistance to the Mongols and who led Russia at Kulikovo. The rise of Moscow was closely bound up with the Church. When the town was still small and comparatively unimportant, Peter, Metropolitan of Russia from 1308 to 1326, decided to settle there; and henceforward it remained the city of the chief hierarch of Russia.

Three figures in the history of the Russian Church during the Mongol period call for particular mention, all of them saints: Alexander Nevsky, Stephen of Perm, and Sergius of Radonezh.

Alexander Nevsky (died 1263), one of the great warrior saints of Russia, has been compared with his western contemporary, Saint Louis, King of France. He was Prince of Novgorod, the one major principality in Russia to escape unharmed in 1237. But soon after the coming of the Tartars, Alexander found himself threatened by other enemies from the west: Swedes, Germans, and Lithuanians. It was impossible to fight on two fronts at once. Alexander decided to submit to Tartar overlordship and to pay tribute; but against his western opponents he put up a vigorous resistance, inflicting two decisive defeats upon them — over the Swedes in 1240 and over the Teutonic Knights in 1242. His reason for treating with the Tartars rather than the west was primarily religious: the Tartars took tribute but refrained from interfering in the life of the Church, whereas the Teutonic Knights had as their avowed aim the reduction of the Russian “schismatics” to the jurisdiction of the Pope. This was the very period when a Latin Patriarch reigned in Constantinople, and the German Crusaders in the north aimed to break Orthodox Novgorod, just as their fellow Crusaders in the south had broken Orthodox Constantinople in 1204. But Alexander, despite the Mongol menace, refused any religious compromise. “Our doctrines are those preached by the Apostles,” he is reported to have replied to messengers from the Pope. “...The tradition of the Holy Fathers of the Seven Councils we scrupulously keep. As for your words, we do not listen to them and we do not want your doctrine” (From the thirteenth-century life of Alexander

Nevsky; quoted in Fedotov, *The Russian Religious Mind*, p. 383). Two centuries later the Greeks after the Council of Florence made the same choice: political submission to the infidel rather than what they felt would be spiritual capitulation to the Church of Rome.

Stephen of Perm brings us to another aspect of Church life under the Mongols: missionary work. From its early days the Russian Church was a missionary Church, and the Russians were quick to send evangelists among their pagan conquerors. In 1261 a certain Mitrophan went as missionary bishop to Sarai, the Tartar capital on the Volga. Others preached, not among the Mongols, but among the primitive pagan tribes in the north-east and far north of the Russian continent. True to the example of Cyril and Methodius, these missionaries translated the Bible and Church services into the languages and dialects of the people to whom they ministered.

Saint Stephen, Bishop of Perm (1340?-1396), worked among the Zyrian tribes. He spent thirteen years of preparation in a monastery, studying not only the native dialects but also Greek, to be the better fitted for the work of translation. While Cyril and Methodius had employed an adapted Greek alphabet in their Slavonic translations, Stephen made use of the native runes. He was an icon painter, and sought to show forth God as the God not of truth only, but of beauty. Like many other of the early Russian missionaries, he did not follow in the wake of military and political conquest, but was ahead of it.

Sergius of Radonezh (1314?-1392), the greatest national saint of Russia, is closely connected with the recovery of the land in the fourteenth century. The outward pattern of his life recalls that of Saint Antony of Egypt. In early manhood Sergius withdrew into the forests (the northern equivalent of the Egyptian desert) and here he founded a hermitage dedicated to the Holy Trinity. After several years of solitude, his place of retreat became known, disciples gathered round him, and he grew into a spiritual guide, an "elder" or *starets*. Finally (and here the parallel with Antony ends) he turned his group of disciples into a regular monastery, which became within his own lifetime the greatest religious house in the land. What the Monastery of the Caves was to Kievan Russia, the Monastery of the Holy Trinity was to Muscovy.

Sergius displayed the same deliberate self-humiliation as Theodosius, living (despite his noble birth) as a peasant, dressing in the poorest of clothing. "His garb was of coarse peasant felt, old and worn, unwashed, saturated with sweat, and heavily patched" (Saint Epiphanius, "The Life of Saint Sergius," in Fedotov, *A Treasury of Russian Spirituality*, pp. 69-70). At the height of his fame, when Abbot of a great community, he still worked in the kitchen garden. Often when he was pointed out to visitors, they could not believe that it was really the celebrated Sergius. "I came to see a prophet," exclaimed one man in disgust, "and you show me a beggar" (Epiphanius, in Fedotov, *op. cit.*, p. 70). Like Theodosius, Sergius played an active part in politics. A close friend of the Grand Dukes of Moscow, he encouraged the city in its expansion, and it is significant that before the Battle of Kulikovo the leader of the Russian forces, Prince Dmitry Donskoy, went specially to Sergius to secure his blessing.

But while there exist many parallels in the lives of Theodosius and Sergius, two important points of difference must be noted. First, whereas the Monastery of the Caves, like most monasteries in Kievan Russia, lay on the outskirts of a city, the Monastery of the Holy Trinity was founded in the wilderness at a distance from the civilized world. Sergius was in his way an explorer and a colonist, pushing forward the boundaries of civilization and reducing the forest to cultivation. Nor is he the only example of a colonist monk at this time. Others went like him into the forests to become hermits, but in their case as in his, what started as a hermitage soon grew into a regular monastery, with a civilian town outside the walls. Then the whole process would start all over again: a fresh generation of monks in search of the solitary life would make their

way into the yet more distant forest, disciples would follow, new communities would form, fresh land would be cleared for agriculture. This steady advance of colonist monks is one of the most striking features of fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Russia. From Radonezh and other centers a vast network of religious houses spread swiftly across the whole of north Russia as far as the White Sea and the Arctic Circle. Fifty communities were founded by disciples of Sergius in his own lifetime, forty more by his followers in the next generation. These explorer monks were not only colonists but missionaries, for as they penetrated farther north, they preached Christianity to the wild pagan tribes in the forests around them.

In the second place, while there is in the religious experience of Theodosius nothing that can be termed specifically mystical, in Sergius a new dimension of the spiritual life becomes evident. Sergius was a contemporary of Gregory Palamas, and it is not impossible that he knew something of the Hesychast movement in Byzantium. At any rate some of the visions granted to Sergius in prayer, which his biographer Epiphanius recorded, can only be interpreted in a mystical sense.

Sergius has been called a “Builder of Russia,” and such he was in three senses: politically, for he encouraged the rise of Moscow and the resistance against the Tartars; geographically, for it was he more than any other who inspired the great advance of monks into the forests; and spiritually, for through his experience of mystical prayer he deepened the inner life of the Russian Church. Better, perhaps, than any other Russian saint, he succeeded in balancing the social and mystical aspects of monasticism. Under his influence and that of his followers, the two centuries from 1350 to 1550 proved a golden age in Russian spirituality.

These two centuries were also a golden age in Russian religious art. During these years Russian painters carried to perfection the iconographic traditions which they had taken over from Byzantium. Icon painting flourished above all among the spiritual children of Saint Sergius. It is no coincidence that the finest of all Orthodox icons from the artistic point of view — the Holy Trinity, by Saint Andrew Rublev (1370?-1430?) — should have been painted in honor of Saint Sergius and placed in his monastery at Radonezh.

Sixty-one years after the death of Sergius, the Byzantine Empire fell to the Turks. The new Russia which took shape after Kulikovo, and which the Saint himself had done so much to build, was now called to take Byzantium’s place as protector of the Orthodox world. It proved both worthy and unworthy of this vocation.

## The Church under Islam

“The stable perseverance in these our days of the Greek Church... notwithstanding the Oppression and Contempt put upon it by the *Turk*, and the Allurements and Pleasures of this World, is a Confirmation no less convincing than the Miracles and Power which attended its first beginnings. For indeed it is admirable to see and consider with what Constancy, Resolution, and Simplicity, ignorant and poor men keep their Faith” (Sir Paul Rycaut, *The Present State of the Greek and Armenian Churches*, 1679).

## Imperium in imperio

“It doth go hugely against the grain to see the crescent exalted everywhere, where the Cross stood so long triumphant”: so wrote Edward Browne in 1677, soon after arriving as Chaplain to the English Embassy at Constantinople. To the Greeks, in 1453 it must also have gone hugely against the grain. For more than a thousand years men had taken the Christian Empire of Byzantium for granted as a permanent element in God’s providential dispensation to the world. Now the “God-protected city” had fallen, and the Greeks were under the rule of the infidel.

It was not an easy transition: but it was made less hard by the Turks themselves, who treated their Christian subjects with remarkable generosity. The Mohammedans in the fifteenth century were far more tolerant towards Christianity than western Christians were towards one another during the Reformation and the seventeenth century. Islam regards the Bible as a holy book and Jesus Christ as a prophet; in Moslem eyes, therefore, the Christian religion is incomplete but not entirely false, and Christians, being “People of the Book,” should not be treated as if on a level with mere pagans. According to Mohammedan teaching, Christians are to undergo no persecution, but may continue without interference in the observance of their faith, so long as they submit quietly to the power of Islam.

Such were the principles which guided the conqueror of Constantinople, Sultan Mohammed II. Before the fall of the city, Greeks called him “the precursor of Antichrist and the second Sennacherib,” but they found that in practice his rule was very different in character. Learning that the office of Patriarch was vacant, Mohammed summoned the monk Gennadius and installed him on the Patriarchal throne. Gennadius (1450-1472), known as George Scholarios before he became a monk, was a voluminous writer and the leading Greek theologian of his time. He was a determined opponent of the Church of Rome, and his appointment as Patriarch meant the final abandonment of the Union of Florence. Doubtless for political reasons, the Sultan deliberately chose a man of anti-Latin convictions: with Gennadius as Patriarch, there would be less likelihood of the Greeks seeking secret aid from Roman Catholic powers.

The Sultan himself instituted the Patriarch, ceremonially investing him with his pastoral staff, exactly as the autocrats of Byzantium had formerly done. The action was symbolic: Mohammed the Conqueror, champion of Islam, became also the protector of Orthodoxy, taking over the role once exercised by the Christian Emperor. Thus Christians were assured a definite place in the Turkish order of society; but, as they were soon to discover, it was a place of guaranteed inferiority. Christianity under Islam was a second-class religion, and its adherents second-class citizens. They paid heavy taxes, wore a distinctive dress, were not allowed to serve in the army, and were forbidden to marry Moslem women. The Church was allowed to undertake no missionary work, and it was a crime to convert a Moslem to the Christian faith. From the material point of view there was every inducement for a Christian to apostatize to Islam. Direct persecution often serves to strengthen a Church; but the Greeks in the Ottoman Empire were denied the more heroic ways of witnessing to their faith, and were subjected instead to the demoralizing effects of an unrelenting social pressure.

Nor was this all. After the fall of Constantinople the Church was not allowed to revert to the situation before the conversion of Constantine; paradoxically enough, the things of Caesar now became more closely associated with the things of God than they had ever been before. For the Mohammedans drew no distinction between religion and politics: from their point of view, if Christianity was to be recognized as an independent religious faith, it was necessary for Christians to be organized as an independent political unit, an Empire within the Empire. The Orthodox Church therefore became a civil as well as a religious institution: it was turned into the *Rum*

*Millet*, the “Roman nation.” The ecclesiastical structure was taken over *in toto* as an instrument of secular administration. The bishops became government officials, the Patriarch was not only the spiritual head of the Greek Orthodox Church, but the civil head of the Greek nation — the *ethnarch* or *millet-bashi*. This situation continued in Turkey until 1923, and in Cyprus until the death of Archbishop Makarios III (1977).

The *millet* system performed one invaluable service: it made possible the survival of the Greek nation as a distinctive unit through four centuries of alien rule. But on the life of the Church it had two melancholy effects. It led first to a sad confusion between Orthodoxy and nationalism. With their civil and political life organized completely around the Church, it became all but impossible for the Greeks to distinguish between Church and nation. The Orthodox faith, being universal, is limited to no single people, culture, or language; but to the Greeks of the Turkish Empire “Hellenism” and Orthodoxy became inextricably intertwined, far more so than they had ever been in the Byzantine Empire. The effects of this confusion continue to the present day.

In the second place, the Church’s higher administration became caught up in a degrading system of corruption and simony. Involved as they were in worldly affairs and matters political, the bishops fell a prey to ambition and financial greed. Each new Patriarch required a *berat* from the Sultan before he could assume office, and for this document he was obliged to pay heavily. The Patriarch recovered his expenses from the episcopate, by exacting a fee from each bishop before instituting him in his diocese; the bishops in turn taxed the parish clergy, and the clergy taxed their flocks. What was once said of the Papacy was certainly true of the Ecumenical Patriarchate under the Turks: everything was for sale.

When there were several candidates for the Patriarchal throne, the Turks virtually sold it to the highest bidder; and they were quick to see that it was in their financial interests to change the Patriarch as frequently as possible, so as to multiply occasions for selling the *berat*. Patriarchs were removed and reinstated with kaleidoscopic rapidity. “Out of 159 Patriarchs who have held office between the fifteenth and the twentieth century, the Turks have on 105 occasions driven Patriarchs from their throne; there have been 27 abdications, often involuntary; 6 Patriarchs have suffered violent deaths by hanging, poisoning, or drowning; and only 21 have died natural deaths while in office” (B. J. Kidd, *The Churches of Eastern Christendom*, London, 1927, p. 304). The same man sometimes held office on four or five different occasions, and there were usually several ex-Patriarchs watching restively in exile for a chance to return to the throne. The extreme insecurity of the Patriarch naturally gave rise to continual intrigues among the Metropolitans of the Holy Synod who hoped to succeed him, and the leaders of the Church were usually separated into bitterly hostile parties. “Every good Christian,” wrote an English resident in the seventeenth-century Levant, “ought with sadness to consider, and with compassion to behold this once glorious Church tear and rend out her own bowels, and give them for food vultures and ravens, and to the wild and fierce Creatures of the World” (Sir Paul Rycout, *The Present State of the Greek and Armenian Churches*, London, 1679, p. 107).

But if the Patriarchate of Constantinople suffered an inward decay, outwardly its power expanded as never before. The Turks looked on the Patriarch of Constantinople as the head of *all* Orthodox Christians in their dominions. The other Patriarchates also within the Ottoman Empire — Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem — remained theoretically independent but were in practice subordinate. The Churches of Bulgaria and Serbia — likewise within Turkish dominions — gradually lost all independence, and by the mid-eighteenth century had passed directly under the Ecumenical Patriarch’s control. But in the nineteenth century, as Turkish power declined, the frontiers of the Patriarchate contracted. The nations which gained freedom from the Turks found

it impracticable to remain subject ecclesiastically to a Patriarch resident in the Turkish capital and closely involved in the Turkish political system. The Patriarch resisted as long as he could, but in each case he bowed eventually to the inevitable. A series of national Churches were carved out of the Patriarchate: the Church of Greece (organized in 1833, recognized by the Patriarch of Constantinople in 1850); the Church of Romania (organized in 1864, recognized in 1885); the Church of Bulgaria (reestablished in 1871, not recognized by Constantinople until 1945); the Church of Serbia (restored and recognized in 1879). The diminution of the Patriarchate has continued in the present century, chiefly as a result of war, and its membership is now but a tiny fraction of what it once was in the palmy days of Ottoman suzerainty.

The Turkish occupation had two opposite effects upon the intellectual life of the Church: it was the cause on the one hand of an immense conservatism and on the other of a certain westernization. Orthodoxy under the Turks felt itself on the defensive. The great aim was *survival* — to keep things going in hope of better days to come. The Greeks clung with miraculous tenacity to the Christian civilization which they had taken over from Byzantium, but they had little opportunity to develop this civilization creatively. Intelligibly enough, they were usually content to repeat accepted formulae, to entrench themselves in the positions which they had inherited from the past. Greek thought underwent an ossification and a hardening which one cannot but regret; yet conservatism had its advantages. In a dark and difficult period the Greeks did in fact maintain the Orthodox tradition substantially unimpaired. The Orthodox under Islam took as their guide Paul's words to Timothy: "Guard the deposit: keep safe what has been entrusted to you" (I Timothy 6:20). Could they in the end have chosen a better motto?

Yet alongside this traditionalism there is another and contrary current in Orthodox theology of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: the current of western infiltration. It was difficult for the Orthodox under Ottoman rule to maintain a good standard of scholarship. Greeks who wished for a higher education were obliged to travel to the non-Orthodox world, to Italy and Germany, to Paris, and even as far as Oxford. Among the distinguished Greek theologians of the Turkish period, a few were self-taught, but the overwhelming majority had been trained in the west under Roman Catholic or Protestant masters.

Inevitably this had an effect upon the way in which they interpreted Orthodox theology. Certainly Greek students in the west read the Fathers, but they only became acquainted with such of the Fathers as were held in esteem by their non-Orthodox professors. Thus Gregory Palamas was still read, for his spiritual teaching, by the monks of Athos; but to most learned Greek theologians of the Turkish period he was utterly unknown. In the works of Eustratius Argenti (died 1758?), the ablest Greek theologian of his time, there is not a single citation from Palamas; and his case is typical. It is symbolic of the state of Greek Orthodox learning in the last four centuries that one of the chief works of Palamas, *The Triads in Defence of the Holy Hesychasts*, should have remained in great part unpublished until 1959.

There was a real danger that Greeks who studied in the West, even though they remained fully loyal in intention to their own Church, would lose their Orthodox mentality and become cut off from Orthodoxy as a living tradition. It was difficult for them not to look at theology through western spectacles; whether consciously or not, they used terminology and forms of argument foreign to their own Church. Orthodox theology underwent what the Russian theologian Father Georges Florovsky (1893-1979) has appropriately termed a *pseudo-morphosis*. Religious thinkers of the Turkish period can be divided for the most part into two broad groups, the "Latinizers" and the "Protestantizers." Yet the extent of this westernization must not be exaggerated. Greeks used the outward forms which they had learnt in the west, but in the substance of their thought

the great majority remained fundamentally Orthodox. The tradition was at times distorted by being forced into alien moulds — distorted, but not wholly destroyed.

Keeping in mind this twofold background of conservatism and westernization, let us consider the challenge presented to the Orthodox world by Reformation and Counter-Reformation.

### **Reformation and Counter-Reformation: their double impact**

The forces of Reform stopped short when they reached the borders of Russia and the Turkish Empire, so that the Orthodox Church has not undergone either a Reformation or a Counter-Reformation. Yet it would be a mistake to conclude that these two movements have had no influence whatever upon Orthodoxy. There were many means of contact: Orthodox, as we have seen, went to study in the west; Jesuits and Franciscans, sent out to the eastern Mediterranean, undertook missionary work among Orthodox; the Jesuits were also at work in the Ukraine; the foreign embassies at Constantinople, both of Roman Catholic and of Protestant powers, played a religious as well as a political role. During the seventeenth century these contacts led to significant developments in Orthodox theology.

The first important exchange of views between Orthodox and Protestants began in 1573, when a delegation of Lutheran scholars from Tübingen, led by Jakob Andreae and Martin Crusius, visited Constantinople and gave the Patriarch, Jeremias II, a copy of the Augsburg Confession translated into Greek. Doubtless they hoped to initiate some sort of Reformation among the Greeks; as Crusius somewhat naively wrote: “If they wish to take thought for the eternal salvation of their souls, they must join us and embrace our teaching, or else perish eternally!” Jeremias, however, in his three Answers to the Tübingen theologians (dated 1576, 1579, 1581), adhered strictly to the traditional Orthodox position and showed no inclination to Protestantism. To his first two letters the Lutherans sent replies, but in his third letter the Patriarch brought the correspondence to a close, feeling that matters had reached a deadlock: “Go your own way, and do not write any more on doctrinal matters; and if you do write, then write only for friendship’s sake.” The whole incident shows the interest felt by the Reformers in the Orthodox Church. The Patriarch’s *Answers* are important as the first clear and authoritative critique of the doctrines of the Reformation from an Orthodox point of view. The chief matters discussed by Jeremias were free will and grace, Scripture and Tradition, the sacraments, prayers for the dead, and prayers to the saints.

During the Tübingen interlude, Lutherans and Orthodox both showed great courtesy to one another. A very different spirit marked the first major contact between Orthodoxy and the Counter-Reformation. This occurred outside the limits of the Turkish Empire, in the Ukraine. After the destruction of Kievan power by the Tartars, a large area in the southwest of Russia, including the city of Kiev itself, became absorbed by Lithuania and Poland; this south-western part of Russia is commonly known as Little Russia or the Ukraine. The crowns of Poland and Lithuania were united under a single ruler from 1386; thus while the monarch of the joint realm, together with the majority of the population, was Roman Catholic, an appreciable minority of his subjects was Russian and Orthodox. These Orthodox in Little Russia were in an uncomfortable predicament. The Patriarch of Constantinople, to whose jurisdiction they belonged, could exercise no very effective control in Poland; their bishops were appointed not by the Church but by the Roman Catholic king of Poland, and were sometimes courtiers wholly lacking in spiritual qualities and incapable of providing any inspiring leadership. There was, however, a vigorous laity, led by several energetic Orthodox nobles, and in many towns there were powerful lay associations, known as the Brotherhoods (*Bratstva*).

More than once the Roman Catholic authorities in Poland had tried to make the Orthodox submit to the Pope. With the arrival of the Society of Jesus in the land in 1564, pressure on the Orthodox increased. The Jesuits began by negotiating secretly with the Orthodox bishops, who were for the most part willing to cooperate (they were, we must remember, the nominees of a Roman Catholic monarch). In due course, so the Jesuits hoped, the whole Orthodox hierarchy in Poland would agree to submit *en bloc* to the Pope, and the “union” could then be proclaimed publicly as a *fait accompli* before anyone else could raise objections: hence the need for concealment in the earlier stages of the operation. But matters did not in fact go entirely according to plan. In 1596 a council was summoned at Brest-Litovsk to proclaim the union with Rome, but the hierarchy was divided. Six out of eight Orthodox bishops, including the Metropolitan of Kiev, Michael Ragoza, supported the union, but the remaining two bishops, together with a large number of the delegates from the monasteries and from the parish clergy, desired to remain members of the Orthodox Church. The two sides concluded by excommunicating and anathematizing one another.

Thus there came into existence in Poland a “Uniate” Church, whose members were known as “Catholics of the Eastern Rite.” The decrees of the Council of Florence formed the basis of the union. The Uniates recognized the supremacy of the Pope, but were allowed to keep their traditional practices (such as married clergy), and they continued as before to use the Slavonic Liturgy, although in course of time western elements crept into it. Outwardly, therefore, there was very little to distinguish Uniates from Orthodox, and one wonders how far uneducated peasants in Little Russia understood what the quarrel was really about. Many of them, at any rate, explained the matter by saying that the Pope had now joined the Orthodox Church.

The government authorities recognized only the decisions of the Roman party at the Council of Brest, so that from their point of view the Orthodox Church in Poland had now ceased legally to exist. Those who desired to continue Orthodox were severely persecuted. Monasteries and churches were seized and given to the Uniates, against the wishes of the monks and congregations. “Roman Catholic Polish gentry sometimes handed over the Orthodox Church of their peasants to a Jewish usurer, who could then demand a fee for allowing an Orthodox baptism or funeral” (Bernard Pares, *A History of Russia*, third edition, London, p. 167). The tale of the Uniate movement in Poland makes sorrowful reading: the Jesuits began by using deceit, and ended by resorting to violence. Doubtless they were sincere men who genuinely desired the unity of Christendom, but the tactics which they employed were better calculated to widen the breach than to close it. The Union of Brest has embittered relations between Orthodoxy and Rome from 1596 until the present day.

It is small wonder that Orthodox, when they saw what was happening in Poland, should prefer Mohammedan to Roman Catholic rulers, just as Alexander Nevsky had preferred the Tartars to the Teutonic Knights. Traveling through the Ukraine in the 1650s, Paul of Aleppo, nephew and Archdeacon to the Patriarch of Antioch, reflected the typical Orthodox attitude when he wrote in his diary: “God perpetuate the Empire of the Turks! For they take their impost and enter into no account of religion, be their subjects Christians or Nazarenes, Jews or Samaritans; whereas these accursed Poles, not content with taking taxes and tithes from their Christian subjects, subjected them to the enemies of Christ, the Jews, who did not allow them to build churches or leave them any educated priests.” The Poles he terms “more vile and wicked than even the worshippers of idols, by their cruelty to Christians” (*The Travels of Macarius*, ed. L. Ridding, London, 1936, p. 15).

Persecution invigorated the Orthodox Church in the Ukraine. Although many Orthodox nobles joined the Uniates, the Brotherhoods stood firm and expanded their activities. To answer

Jesuit propaganda they maintained printing presses and issued books in defense of Orthodoxy; to counteract the influence of the Jesuit schools they organized Orthodox schools of their own. By 1650 the level of learning in Little Russia was higher than anywhere else in the Orthodox world; scholars from Kiev, traveling to Moscow at this time, did much to raise intellectual standards in Great Russia. In this revival of learning a particularly brilliant part was played by Peter of Moghila, Metropolitan of Kiev from 1633 to 1647. To him we must shortly return.

One of the representatives of the Patriarchate of Constantinople at Brest in 1596 was a young Greek priest called Cyril Lukaris (1572-1638). His experiences in Little Russia inspired him with a lifelong hatred of the Church of Rome, and when he became Patriarch of Constantinople he devoted his full energies to combating all Roman Catholic influence in the Turkish Empire. It was unfortunate, though perhaps inevitable, that in his struggle against “the Paptic Church” (as the Greeks termed it) he should have become deeply involved in politics. He turned naturally for help to the Protestant embassies at Constantinople, while his Jesuit opponents for their part used the diplomatic representatives of the Roman Catholic powers. Besides invoking the political assistance of Protestant diplomats, Cyril also fell under Protestant influence in matters of theology, and his *Confession* (By “Confession” in this context is meant a statement of faith, a solemn declaration of religious belief), first published at Geneva in 1629, is distinctively Calvinist in much of its teaching.

Cyril’s reign as Patriarch is one long series of stormy and unedifying intrigues, and forms a lurid example of the troubled state of the Ecumenical Patriarchate under the Ottomans. Six times deposed from office and six times reinstated, he was finally strangled by Turkish janissaries and his body cast into the Bosphorus. In the last resort there is something deeply tragic about his career, since he was possibly the most brilliant man to have held office as Patriarch since the days of Saint Photius. Had he but lived under happier conditions, freed from political intrigue, his exceptional gifts might have been put to better use.

Cyril’s Calvinism was sharply and speedily repudiated by his fellow Orthodox, his *Confession* being condemned by no less than six local Councils between 1638 and 1691. In direct reaction to Cyril two other Orthodox hierarchs, Peter of Moghila and Dositheus of Jerusalem, produced Confessions of their own. Peter’s *Orthodox Confession*, written in 1640, was based directly on Roman Catholic manuals. It was approved by the Council of Jassy in Romania (1642), but only after it had been revised by a Greek, Meletius Syrigos, who in particular altered the passages about the consecration in the Eucharist (which Peter attributed solely to the Words of Institution) and about Purgatory. Even in its revised form the Confession of Moghila is still the most Latin document ever to be adopted by an official Council of the Orthodox Church. Dositheus, Patriarch of Jerusalem from 1669 to 1707, also drew heavily upon Latin sources. His *Confession*, ratified in 1672 by the Council of Jerusalem (also known as the Council of Bethlehem), answers Cyril’s *Confession* point by point with concision and clarity. The chief matters over which Cyril and Dositheus diverge are four: the question of free will, grace, and predestination; the doctrine of the Church; the number and nature of the sacraments; and the veneration of icons. In his statement upon the Eucharist, Dositheus adopted not only the Latin term *transubstantiation* but the Scholastic distinction between *substance* and *accidents* (See p. 291, note 1); and in defending prayers for the dead he came very close to the Roman doctrine of Purgatory, without actually using the word Purgatory itself. On the whole, however, the *Confession* of Dositheus is less Latin than that of Moghila, and must certainly be regarded as a document of primary importance in the history of modern Orthodox theology. Faced by the Calvinism of Lukaris, Dositheus used the weapons which lay nearest to hand — Latin weapons (under the circumstances it was perhaps

the only thing that he could do); but the faith which he defended with these Latin weapons was not Roman, but Orthodox.

Outside the Ukraine, relations between Orthodox and Roman Catholics were often friendly in the seventeenth century. In many places in the eastern Mediterranean, particularly in the Greek islands under Venetian rule, Greeks and Latins shared in one another's worship: we even read of Roman Catholic processions of the Blessed Sacrament, which the Orthodox clergy attended in force, wearing full vestments, with candles and banners. Greek bishops invited the Latin missionaries to preach to their flocks or to hear confessions. But after 1700 these friendly contacts grew less frequent, and by 1750 they had largely ceased. In 1724 a large part of the Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch submitted to Rome; after this the Orthodox authorities, fearing that the same thing might happen elsewhere in the Turkish Empire, were far stricter in their dealings with Roman Catholics. The climax in anti-Roman feeling came in 1755, when the Patriarchs of Constantinople, Alexandria, and Jerusalem declared Latin baptism to be entirely invalid and demanded that all converts to Orthodoxy be baptized anew. "The baptisms of heretics are to be rejected and abhorred," the decree stated; they are "waters which cannot profit... nor give any sanctification to such as receive them, nor avail at all to the washing away of sins." This measure remained in force in the Greek world until the end of the nineteenth century, but it did not extend to the Church of Russia; the Russians generally baptized Roman Catholic converts between 1441 and 1667, but since 1667 they have not normally done so.

The Orthodox of the seventeenth century came into contact not only with Roman Catholics, Lutherans, and Calvinists but also with the Church of England. Cyril Lukaris corresponded with Archbishop Abbot of Canterbury, and a future Patriarch of Alexandria, Metrophanes Kritopoulos, studied at Oxford from 1617 to 1624: Kritopoulos is the author of a *Confession*, slightly Protestant in tone, but widely used in the Orthodox Church. Around 1694 there was even a plan to establish a "Greek College" at Gloucester Hall, Oxford (now Worcester College), and about ten Greek students were actually sent to Oxford; but the plan failed for lack of money, and the Greeks found the food and lodging so poor that many of them ran away. From 1716 to 1725 a most interesting correspondence was maintained between the Orthodox and the Non-Jurors (a group of Anglicans who separated from the main body of the Church of England in 1688, rather than swear allegiance to the usurper William of Orange). The Non-Jurors approached both the four Eastern Patriarchs and the Church of Russia, in the hope of establishing communion with the Orthodox. But the Non-Jurors could not accept the Orthodox teaching concerning the presence of Christ in the Eucharist; they were also troubled by the veneration shown by Orthodoxy to the Mother of God, the saints, and the Holy Icons. Eventually the correspondence was suspended without any agreement being reached.

Looking back on the work of Moghila and Dositheus, on the Councils of Jassy and Jerusalem, and on the correspondence with the Non-Jurors, one is struck by the limitations of Greek theology in this period: one does not find the Orthodox tradition in its *fullness*. Nevertheless the Councils of the seventeenth century made a permanent and constructive contribution to Orthodoxy. The Reformation controversies raised problems which neither the Ecumenical Councils nor the Church of the later Byzantine Empire was called to face: in the seventeenth century the Orthodox were forced to think more carefully about the sacraments, and about the nature and authority of the Church. It was important for Orthodoxy to express its mind on these topics, and to define its position in relation to new teachings which had arisen in the west; this was the task which the seventeenth-century Councils achieved. These Councils were local, but the substance of their decisions has been accepted by the Orthodox Church as a whole. The seventeenth-

century Councils, like the Hesychast Councils three hundred years before, show that creative theological work did not come to an end in the Orthodox Church after the period of the Ecumenical Councils. There are important doctrines not defined by the General Councils, which every Orthodox is bound to accept as an integral part of his faith.

Many western people learn about Orthodoxy either from studying the Byzantine period, or through the medium of Russian religious thought in the last hundred years. In both cases they tend to by-pass the seventeenth century, and to underestimate its influence upon Orthodox history.

Throughout the Turkish period the traditions of Hesychasm remained alive, particularly on Mount Athos; and at the end of the eighteenth century there was an important spiritual revival, whose effects can still be felt today. At the center of this revival was a monk of Athos, Saint Nicodemus of the Holy Mountain (“the Hagiorite,” 1748-1809), justly called “an encyclopedia of the Athonite learning of his time.” With the help of Saint Macarius (Notaras), Metropolitan of Corinth, Nicodemus compiled an anthology of spiritual writings called the *Philokalia*. Published at Venice in 1782, it is a gigantic work of 1,207 folio pages, containing authors from the fourth century to the fifteenth, and dealing chiefly with the theory and practice of prayer, especially the Jesus Prayer. It has proved one of the most influential publications in Orthodox history, and has been widely read not only by monks but by many living in the world. Translated into Slavonic and Russian, it was instrumental in producing a spiritual reawakening in nineteenth-century Russia.

Nicodemus was conservative, but not narrow or obscurantist. He drew on Roman Catholic works of devotion, adapting for Orthodox use books by Lorenzo Scupoli and Ignatius Loyola. He and his circle were strong advocates of frequent communion, although in his day most Orthodox communicated only a few times a year. Nicodemus was in fact vigorously attacked on this issue, but a Council at Constantinople in 1819 confirmed his teaching. Movements which are trying to introduce weekly communion in Greece today appeal to the great authority of Nicodemus.

It has been rightly said that if there is much to pity in the state of Orthodoxy during the Turkish period, there is also much to admire. Despite innumerable discouragements, the Orthodox Church under Ottoman rule never lost heart. There were of course many cases of apostasy to Islam, but in Europe at any rate they were not as frequent as might have been expected. Orthodoxy in these centuries was not lacking in martyrs, who are honored in the Church’s calendar with the special title of *New Martyrs*: many of them were Greeks who became Mohammedan and then repented, returning to Christianity once more — for which the penalty was death. The corruption in the higher administration of the Church, shocking though it was, had very little effect on the daily life of the ordinary Christian, who was still able to worship Sunday by Sunday in his parish church. More than anything else it was the Holy Liturgy which kept Orthodoxy alive in those dark days.

## Moscow and Petersburg

“The sense of God’s presence — of the supernatural — seems to me to penetrate Russian life more completely than that of any of the western nations” (H.P. Liddon, Canon of Saint Paul’s, after a visit to Russia in 1867)

## Moscow the third Rome

After the taking of Constantinople in 1453, there was only one nation capable of assuming leadership in eastern Christendom. The greater part of Bulgaria, Serbia, and Romania had already been conquered by the Turks, while the rest was absorbed before long. Russia alone remained. To the Russians it seemed no coincidence that at the very moment when the Byzantine Empire came to an end, they themselves were at last throwing off the few remaining vestiges of Tartar suzerainty: God, it seemed, was granting them their freedom because He had chosen them to be the successors of Byzantium.

At the same time as the land of Russia, the Russian Church gained its independence, more by chance than from any deliberate design. Hitherto the Patriarch of Constantinople had appointed the head of the Russian Church, the Metropolitan. At the Council of Florence the Metropolitan was a Greek, Isidore. A leading supporter of the union with Rome, Isidore returned to Moscow in 1441 and proclaimed the decrees of Florence, but he met with no support from the Russians: he was imprisoned by the Grand Duke, but after a time was allowed to escape, and went back to Italy. The chief see was thus left vacant; but the Russians could not ask the Patriarch for a new Metropolitan, because until 1453 the official Church at Constantinople continued to accept the Florentine Union. Reluctant to take action on their own, the Russians delayed for several years. Eventually in 1448 a council of Russian bishops proceeded to elect a Metropolitan without further reference to Constantinople. After 1453, when the Florentine Union was abandoned at Constantinople, communion between the Patriarchate and Russia was restored, but Russia continued to appoint its own chief hierarch. Henceforward the Russian Church was autocephalous.

The idea of Moscow as successor of Byzantium was assisted by a marriage. In 1472 Ivan III “the Great” (reigned 1462-1505) married Sophia, niece of the last Byzantine Emperor. Although Sophia had brothers and was not the legal heir to the throne, the marriage served to establish a dynastic link with Byzantium. The Grand Duke of Moscow began to assume the Byzantine titles of “autocrat” and “Tsar” (an adaptation of the Roman “Caesar”) and to use the double-headed eagle of Byzantium as his State emblem. Men came to think of Moscow as “the Third Rome.” The first Rome (so they argued) had fallen to the barbarians and then lapsed into heresy; the second Rome, Constantinople, had in turn fallen into heresy at the Council of Florence, and as a punishment had been taken by the Turks. Moscow therefore had succeeded Constantinople as the Third and last Rome, the center of Orthodox Christendom. The monk Philotheus of Pskov set forth this line of argument in a famous letter written in 1510 to Tsar Basil III:

I wish to add a few words on the present Orthodox Empire of our ruler: he is on earth the sole Emperor (Tsar) of the Christians, the leader of the Apostolic Church which stands no longer Rome or in Constantinople, but in the blessed city of Moscow. She alone shines in the whole world brighter than the sun.... All Christian Empires are fallen and in their stead stands alone the Empire of our ruler in accordance with the Prophetic books. Two Romes have fallen, but the third stands and a fourth there will not be (Quoted in Baynes and Moss, *Byzantium: an Introduction*, p. 385).

This idea of Moscow the Third Rome had a certain appropriateness when applied to the Tsar: the Emperor of Byzantium once acted as champion and protector of Orthodoxy, and now the autocrat of Russia was called to perform the same task. But it could also be understood in other and

less acceptable ways. If Moscow was the Third Rome, then should not the head of the Russian Church rank senior to the Patriarch of Constantinople? In fact this seniority has never been granted, and Russia has always ranked no higher than fifth among the Orthodox Churches, after Jerusalem. The concept of Moscow the Third Rome also encouraged a kind of Muscovite Messianism, and led Russians sometimes to think of themselves as a chosen people who could do no wrong; and if taken in a political as well as religious sense, it could be used to further the ends of Russian secular imperialism.

Now that the dream for which Saint Sergius worked — the liberation of Russia from the Tartars — had become a reality, a sad division occurred among his spiritual descendants. Sergius had united the social with the mystical side of monasticism, but under his successors these two aspects became separated. The separation first came into the open at a Church council in 1503. As this council drew to its close, Saint Nilus of Sora (Nil Sorsky, 1433?-1508), a monk from a remote hermitage in the forests beyond the Volga, rose to speak, and launched an attack on the ownership of land by monasteries (about a third of the land in Russia belonged to monasteries at this time). Saint Joseph, Abbot of Volokalamsk (1439-1515), replied in defense of monastic landholding. The majority of the Council supported Joseph; but there were others in the Russian Church who agreed with Nilus — chiefly hermits living like him beyond the Volga. Joseph's party were known as the Possessors, Nilus and the "Transvolga hermits" as the Non-Possessors. During the next twenty years there was considerable tension between the two groups. Finally in 1525-1526 the Non-Possessors attacked Tsar Basil III for unjustly divorcing his wife (the Orthodox Church grants divorce, but only for certain reasons); the Tsar then imprisoned the leading Non-Possessors and closed the Transvolga hermitages. The tradition of Saint Nilus was driven underground, and although it never entirely disappeared, its influence in the Russian Church was very much restricted. For the time being the outlook of the Possessors reigned supreme.

Behind the question of monastic property lay two different conceptions of the monastic life, and ultimately two different views of the relation of the Church to the world. The Possessors emphasized the social obligations of monasticism: it is part of the work of monks to care for the sick and poor, to show hospitality and to teach; to do these things efficiently, monasteries need money and therefore they must own land. Monks (so they argued) do not use their wealth on themselves, but hold it in trust for the benefit of others. There was a saying among the followers of Joseph, "The riches of the Church are the riches of the poor."

The Non-Possessors argued on the other hand that almsgiving is the duty of the laity, while a monk's primary task is to help others by praying for them and by setting an example. To do these things properly a monk must be detached from the world, and only those who are vowed to complete poverty can achieve true detachment. Monks who are landowners cannot avoid being tangled up in secular anxieties, and because they become absorbed in worldly concerns, they act and think in a worldly way. In the words of the monk Vassian (Prince Patrikiev), a disciple of Nilus:

Where in the traditions of the Gospels, Apostles, and Fathers are monks ordered to acquire populous villages and enslave peasants to the brotherhood? ... We look into the hands of the rich, fawn slavishly, flatter them to get out of them some little village... We wrong and rob and sell Christians, our brothers. We torture them with scourges like wild beasts (Quoted in B. Pares, *A History of Russia*, third edition, p. 93).

Vassian's protest against torture and scourges brings us to a second matter over which the two sides disagreed, the treatment of heretics. Joseph upheld the view all but universal in Christendom at this time: if heretics are recalcitrant, the Church must call in the civil arm and resort to prison, torture, and if necessary fire. But Nilus condemned all forms of coercion and violence against heretics. One has only to recall how Protestants and Roman Catholics treated one another in western Europe during the Reformation, to realize how exceptional Nilus was in his tolerance and respect for human freedom.

The question of heretics in turn involved the wider problem of relations between Church and State. Nilus regarded heresy as a spiritual matter, to be settled by the Church without the State's intervention; Joseph invoked the help of the secular authorities. In general Nilus drew a clearer line than Joseph between the things of Caesar and the things of God. The Possessors were great supporters of the ideal of Moscow the Third Rome; believing in a close alliance between Church and State, they took an active part in politics, as Sergius had done, but perhaps they were less careful than Sergius to guard the Church from becoming the servant of the State. The Non-Possessors for their part had a sharper awareness of the prophetic and other-worldly witness of monasticism. The Josephites were in danger of identifying the Kingdom of God with a kingdom of this world; Nilus saw that the Church on earth must always be a Church in pilgrimage. While Joseph and his party were great patriots and nationalists, the Non-Possessors thought more of the universality and Catholicity of the Church.

Nor did the divergences between the two sides end here: they also had different ideas of Christian piety and prayer. Joseph emphasized the place of rules and discipline, Nilus the inner and personal relation between God and the soul. Joseph stressed the place of beauty in worship, Nilus feared that beauty might become an idol: the monk (so Nilus maintained) is dedicated not only to an outward poverty, but to an absolute self-stripping, and he must be careful lest a devotion to beautiful icons or Church music comes between him and God. (In this suspicion of beauty, Nilus displays a Puritanism — almost an Iconoclasm — most unusual in Russian spirituality). Joseph realized the importance of corporate worship and of liturgical prayer:

A man can pray in his own room, but he will never pray there as he prays in Church... where the singing of many voices rises united towards God, where all have but one thought and one voice in the unity of love.... On high the seraphim proclaim the *Trisagion*, here below the human multitude raises the same hymn. Heaven and earth keep festival together, one in thanksgiving, one in happiness, one in joy (Quoted by J. Meyendorff, "Une controverse sur le rôle social de l'Église. La querelle des biens ecclésiastiques au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle en Russie," in the periodical *Irénikon*, vol. XXIX (1956), p. 29).

Nilus on the other hand was chiefly interested not in liturgical but in mystical prayer: before he settled at Sora he had lived as a monk on Mount Athos, and he knew the Byzantine Hesychast tradition at first hand.

The Russian Church rightly saw good things in the teaching of both Joseph and Nilus, and has canonized them both. Each inherited a part of the tradition of Saint Sergius, but no more than a part: Russia needed both the Josephite and the Transvolgian forms of monasticism, for each supplemented the other. It was sad indeed that the two sides entered into conflict, and that the tradition of Nilus was largely suppressed: without the Non-Possessors, the spiritual life of the Russian Church became one-sided and unbalanced. The close integration which the Josephites

upheld between Church and State, their Russian nationalism, their devotion to the outward forms of worship — these things were to lead to trouble in the next century.

One of the most interesting participants in the dispute of Possessors and Non-Possessors was Saint Maximus the Greek (1470?-1556), a “bridge figure” whose long life embraces the three worlds of Renaissance Italy, Mount Athos, and Muscovy. Greek by birth, he spent the years of early manhood in Florence and Venice, as a friend of Humanist scholars such as Pico della Mirandola; he also fell under the influence of Savonarola, and for two years was a Dominican. Returning to Greece in 1504, he became a monk on Athos; in 1517 he was invited to Russia by the Tsar, to translate Greek works into Slavonic and to correct the Russian service books, which were disfigured by numerous errors. Like Nilus, he was devoted to the Hesychast ideals, and on arriving in Russia he threw in his lot with the Non-Possessors. He suffered with the rest, and was imprisoned for twenty-six years, from 1525 to 1551. He was attacked with particular bitterness for the changes which he proposed in the service books, and the work of revision was broken off and left unfinished. His great gifts of learning, from which the Russians could have benefited so much, were largely wasted in imprisonment. He was as strict as Nilus in his demand for self-stripping and spiritual poverty. “If you truly love Christ crucified,” he wrote, “...be a stranger, unknown, without country, without name, silent before your relatives, your acquaintances, and your friends; distribute all that you have to the poor, sacrifice all your old habits and all your own will” (Quoted by E. Denissoff, *Maxime le Grec et l'Occident*, Paris, 1943, pp. 275-276).

Although the victory of the Possessors meant a close alliance between Church and State, the Church did not forfeit all independence. When Ivan the Terrible's power was at its height, the Metropolitan of Moscow, Saint Philip (died 1569), dared to protest openly against the Tsar's bloodshed and injustice, and rebuked him to his face during the public celebration of the Liturgy. Ivan put him in prison and later had him strangled. Another who sharply criticized Ivan was Saint Basil the Blessed, the “Fool in Christ” (died 1552). Folly for the sake of Christ is a form of sanctity found in Byzantium, but particularly prominent in medieval Russia: the “Fool” carries the ideal of self-stripping and humiliation to its furthest extent, by renouncing all intellectual gifts, all forms of earthly wisdom, and by voluntarily taking upon himself the Cross of madness. These Fools often performed a valuable social role: simply because they were fools, they could criticize those in power with a frankness which no one else dared to employ. So it was with Basil, the “living conscience” of the Tsar. Ivan listened to the shrewd censure of the Fool, and so far from punishing him, treated him with marked honor.

In 1589, with the consent of the Patriarch of Constantinople, the head of the Russian Church was raised from the rank of Metropolitan to that of Patriarch. It was from one point of view a triumph for the ideal of Moscow the Third Rome; but it was a qualified triumph, for the Moscow Patriarch did not take first place in the Orthodox world, but fifth, after Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem (but superior to the more ancient Patriarchate of Serbia). As things turned out, the Moscow Patriarchate was to last for little more than a century.

### **The schism of the Old Believers**

The seventeenth century in Russia opened with a period of confusion and disaster, known as the Time of Troubles, when the land was divided against itself and fell a victim to outside enemies. But after 1613 Russia made a sudden recovery, and the next forty years were a time of reconstruction and reform in many branches of the nation's life. In this work of reconstruction the Church played a large part. The reforming movement in the Church was led at first by the Abbot Dionysius of the Trinity-Saint Sergius Monastery and by Philaret, Patriarch of Moscow from

1619 to 1633 (he was the father of the Tsar); after 1633 the leadership passed to a group of married parish clergy, and in particular to the Archpriests John Neronov and Avvakum Petrovitch. The work of correcting service books, begun in the previous century by Maximus the Greek, was now cautiously resumed; a Patriarchal Press was set up at Moscow, and more accurate Church books were issued, although the authorities did not venture to make too many drastic alterations. On the parish level, the reformers did all they could to raise moral standards alike among the clergy and the laity. They fought against drunkenness; they insisted that the fasts be observed; they demanded that the Liturgy and other services in the parish churches should be sung with reverence and without omissions; they encouraged frequent preaching.

The reforming group represented much of what was best in the tradition of Saint Joseph of Volokolamsk. Like Joseph they believed in authority and discipline, and saw the Christian life in terms of ascetic rules and liturgical prayer. They expected not only monks but parish priests and laity — husband, wife, children — to keep the fasts and to spend long periods at prayer each day, either in church or before the icons in their own homes. Those who would appreciate the severity and self-discipline of the reforming circle should read the vivid and extraordinary autobiography of the Archpriest Avvakum (1620-1682). In one of his letters Avvakum records how each evening, after he and his family had recited the usual evening prayers together, the lights would be put out: then he recited 600 prayers to Jesus and 100 to the Mother of God, accompanied by 300 prostrations (at each prostration he would lay his forehead on the ground, and then rise once more to a standing position). His wife, when with child (as she usually was), recited only 400 prayers with 200 prostrations. This gives some idea of the exacting standards observed by devout Russians in the seventeenth century.

The reformers' program made few concessions to human weakness, and was too ambitious ever to be completely realized. Nevertheless Muscovy around 1650 went far to justify the title "Holy Russia." Orthodox from the Turkish Empire who visited Moscow were amazed (and often filled with dismay) by the austerity of the fasts, by the length and magnificence of the services. The whole nation appeared to live as "one vast religious house" (N. Zernov, *Moscow the Third Rome*, p. 51). Archdeacon Paul of Aleppo, who stayed in Russia from 1654 to 1656, found that banquets at Court were accompanied not by music but by readings from the Lives of the Saints, as at meals in a monastery. Services lasting seven hours or more were attended by the Tsar and the whole Court: "Now what shall we say of these duties, severe enough to turn children's hair grey, so strictly observed by the Emperor, Patriarch, grandees, princesses, and ladies, standing upright on their legs from morning to evening? Who would believe that they should thus go beyond the devout anchorites of the desert?" ("The Travels of Macarius," in W. Palmer, *The Patriarch and the Tsar*, London, 1873, vol. II, p. 107). The children were not excluded from these rigorous observances: "What surprised us most was to see the boys and little children... standing bareheaded and motionless, without betraying the smallest gesture of impatience" (*The Travels of Macarius*, edited Ridding, p. 68). Paul found Russian strictness not entirely to his taste. He complains that they permit no "mirth, laughter, and jokes," no drunkenness, no "opium eating," and no smoking: "For the special crime of drinking tobacco they even put men to death" (*ibid.*, p. 21). It is an impressive picture which Paul and other visitors to Russia present, but there is perhaps too much emphasis on externals. One Greek remarked on his return home that Muscovite religion seemed to consist largely in bell-ringing.

In 1652-1653 there began a fatal quarrel between the reforming group and the new Patriarch, Nikon (1605-1681). A peasant by origin, Nikon was probably the most brilliant and gifted man ever to become head of the Russian Church; but he suffered from an overbearing and au-

thoritarian temper. Nikon was a strong admirer of things Greek: “I am a Russian and the son of a Russian,” he used to say, “but my faith and my religion are Greek” (ibid., p. 37). He demanded that Russian practices should be made to conform at every point to the standard of the four ancient Patriarchates, and that the Russian service books should be altered wherever they differed from the Greek.

This policy was bound to provoke opposition among those who belonged to the Josephite tradition. They regarded Moscow as the Third Rome, and Russia as the stronghold and norm of Orthodoxy; and now Nikon told them that they must in all respects copy the Greeks. But was not Russia an independent Church, a fully grown member of the Orthodox family, entitled to hold to her own national customs and traditions? The Russians certainly respected the memory of the Mother Church of Byzantium from which they had received the faith, but they did not feel the same reverence for contemporary Greeks. They remembered the “apostasy” of the Greeks at Florence, and they knew something of the corruption and disorders within the Patriarchate of Constantinople under Turkish rule.

Had Nikon proceeded gently and tactfully, all might yet have been well: Patriarch Philaret had already made some corrections in the service books without arousing opposition. Nikon, however, was not a gentle or a tactful man, but pressed on with his program regardless of the feelings of others. In particular he insisted that the sign of the Cross, at that time made by the Russians with two fingers, should now be made in the Greek fashion with three. This may seem a trivial matter; but it must be remembered how great an importance Orthodox in general and Russians in particular have always attached to ritual actions, to the symbolic gestures whereby the inner belief of a Christian is expressed. In the eyes of simple believers a change in the symbol constituted a change in the faith. The divergence over the sign of the Cross also raised in concrete form the whole question of Greek *versus* Russian Orthodoxy. The Greek form with three fingers was more recent than the Russian form with two: why should the Russians, who remained loyal to the ancient ways, be forced to accept a “modern” Greek innovation?

Neronov and Avvakum, together with many other clergy, monks, and lay people, defended the old Russian practices and refused to accept Nikon’s changes or to use the new service books which he issued. Nikon was not a man to tolerate any disagreement, and he had his opponents exiled and imprisoned: in some cases they were eventually put to death. Yet despite persecution, the opposition continued; although Neronov finally submitted, Avvakum refused to give way, and after ten years of exile and twenty-two years of imprisonment (twelve of them spent in an underground hut) he was finally burnt at the stake. His supporters regarded him as a saint and martyr for the faith. Those who like Avvakum defied the official Church with its Nikonian service books eventually formed a separate sect (*raskol*) known as the *Old Believers* (it would be more exact to call them Old Ritualists). Thus there arose in seventeenth-century Russia a movement of Dissent; but if we compare it with English Dissent of the same period, we notice two great differences. First, the Old Believers — the Russian Dissenters — differed from the official Church solely in ritual, not in doctrine; and secondly, while English Dissent was radical — a protest against the official Church for not carrying reform far enough — Russian Dissent was the protest of conservatives against an official Church which in their eyes had carried reform too far.

The schism of the Old Believers has continued to the present day. Before 1917 their numbers were officially assessed at two million, but the true figure may well have been over five times as great. They are divided into two main groups, the *Popovtsy*, who have retained the priesthood and who since 1846 have also possessed their own succession of bishops; and the *Bezpopovtsy*, who have no priests.

There is much to admire in the *Raskolniki*. They numbered in their ranks the finest elements among the parish clergy and the laity of seventeenth-century Russia. Historians in the past have done them a serious injustice by regarding the whole dispute merely as a quarrel over the position of a finger, over texts, syllables, and false letters. The true cause of the schism lay elsewhere, and was concerned with something far more profound. The Old Believers fought for the two-finger sign of the Cross, for the old texts and customs, not simply as ends in themselves, but because of the matter of principle which was herein involved: they saw these things as embodying the ancient tradition of the Church, and this ancient tradition, so they held, had been preserved in its full purity by Russia and Russia alone. Can we say that they were entirely wrong? The two-finger sign of the Cross was in fact more ancient than the three-finger form; it was the Greeks who were the innovators, the Russians who remained loyal to the old ways. Why then should the Russians be forced to adopt the modern Greek practice? Certainly, in the heat of controversy the Old Believers pushed their case to extremes, and their legitimate reverence for "Holy Russia" degenerated into a fanatical nationalism; but Nikon also went too far in his uncritical admiration for all things Greek.

"We have no reason to be ashamed of our *Raskol*," wrote Khomiakov. "...It is worthy of a great people, and could inspire respect in a stranger; but it is far from embracing all the richness of Russian thought" (See A. Gratieux, *A.S. Khomiakov et le mouvement slavophile*, Paris, 1939, vol. II, p. 165). It does not embrace the richness of Russian thought because it represents but a single aspect of Russian Christianity — the tradition of the Possessors. The defects of the Old Believers are the Josephite defects writ large: too narrow a nationalism, too great an emphasis on the externals of worship. Nikon too, despite his Hellenism, is in the end a Josephite: he demanded an absolute uniformity in the externals of worship, and like the Possessors he freely invoked the help of the civil arm in order to suppress all religious opponents. More than anything else, it was his readiness to resort to persecution which made the schism definitive. Had the development of Church life in Russia between 1550 and 1650 been less one-sided, perhaps a lasting separation would have been avoided. If men had thought more (as Nilus did) of tolerance and freedom instead of using persecution, then a reconciliation might have been effected; and if they had attended more to mystical prayer, they might have argued less bitterly about ritual. Behind the division of the seventeenth century lie the disputes of the sixteenth.

As well as establishing Greek practices in Russia, Nikon pursued a second aim: to make the Church supreme over the State. In the past the theory governing relations between Church and State had been the same in Russia as in Byzantium — a dyarchy or symphony of two coordinated powers, *sacerdotium* and *imperium*, each supreme in its own sphere. In the Assumption Cathedral of the Kremlin there were placed two equal thrones, one for the Patriarch and one for the Tsar. In practice the Church had enjoyed a wide measure of independence and influence in the Kievan and Mongol periods. But under the Moscow Tsardom, although the theory of two equal powers remained the same, in practice the civil power came to control the Church more and more; the Josephite policy naturally encouraged this tendency. Nikon attempted to reverse the situation. Not only did he demand that the Patriarch's authority be absolute in religious matters, but he also claimed the right to intervene in civil affairs, and assumed the title "Great Lord," hitherto reserved to the Tsar alone. Tsar Alexis had a deep respect for Nikon, and at first submitted to his control. "The Patriarch's authority is so great," wrote Olearius, visiting Moscow in 1654, "that he in a manner divides the sovereignty with the Grand Duke" (Palmer, *The Patriarch and the Tsar*, vol. II, p. 407).

But after a time Alexis began to resent Nikon's interference in secular affairs. In 1658 Nikon, perhaps in hopes of restoring his influence, decided upon a curious step: he withdrew into

semi-retirement, but did not resign the office of Patriarch. For eight years the Russian Church remained without an effective head, until at the Tsar's request a great Council was held at Moscow in 1666-1667 over which the Patriarchs of Alexandria and Antioch presided. The Council decided in favor of Nikon's *reforms*, but against his *person*: Nikon's changes in the service books and above all his ruling on the sign of the Cross were confirmed, but Nikon himself was deposed and exiled, a new Patriarch being appointed in his place. The Council was therefore a triumph for Nikon's policy of imposing Greek practices on the Russian Church, but a defeat for his attempt to set the Patriarch above the Tsar. The Council reasserted the Byzantine theory of a harmony of equal powers.

But the decisions of the Moscow Council upon the relations of Church and State did not remain long in force. The pendulum which Nikon had pushed too far in one direction soon swung back in the other with redoubled violence. Peter the Great (reigned 1682-1725) altogether suppressed the office of patriarch, whose powers Nikon had so ambitiously striven to aggrandize.

### **The Synodical period (1700-1917).**

Peter was determined that there should be no more Nicons. In 1700, when Patriarch Adrian died, Peter took no steps towards the appointment of a successor; and in 1721 he proceeded to issue the celebrated *Spiritual Regulation*, which declared the Patriarchate to be abolished, and set up in its place a commission, the Spiritual College or Holy Synod. This was composed of twelve members, three of whom were bishops, and the rest drawn from the heads of monasteries or from the married clergy.

The constitution of the Synod was not based on Orthodox Canon Law, but copied from the Protestant ecclesiastical synods in Germany. Its members were not chosen by the Church but nominated by the Emperor; and the Emperor who nominated could also dismiss them at will. Whereas a Patriarch, holding office for life, could perhaps defy the Tsar, a member of the Holy Synod was allowed no scope for heroism: he was simply retired. The Emperor was not called "Head of the Church," but he was given the title "Supreme Judge of the Spiritual College." Meetings of the Synod were not attended by the Emperor himself, but by a government official, the Chief Procurator. The Procurator, although he sat at a separate table and took no part in the discussions, in practice wielded considerable power over Church affairs and was in effect if not in name a "Minister for Religion."

The *Spiritual Regulation* sees the Church not as a divine institution but as a department of State. Based largely on secular presuppositions, it makes little allowance for what were termed in the English Reformation "the Crown rights of the Redeemer." This is true not only of its provisions for the higher administration of the Church, but of many of its other rulings. A priest who learns, while hearing confessions, of any scheme which the government might consider seditious, is ordered to violate the secrecy of the sacrament and to supply the police with names and full details. Monasticism is bluntly termed "the origin of innumerable disorders and disturbances" and placed under many restrictions. New monasteries are not to be founded without special permission; monks are forbidden to live as hermits; no woman under the age of fifty is allowed to take vows as a nun.

There was a deliberate purpose behind these restrictions on the monasteries, the chief centers of social work in Russia up to this time. The abolition of the Patriarchate was part of a wider process: Peter sought not only to deprive the Church of leadership, but to eliminate it from all participation in social work. Peter's successors circumscribed the work of the monasteries still more drastically. Elizabeth (reigned 1741-1762) confiscated most of the monastic estates, and

Catherine II (reigned 1762-1796) suppressed more than half the monasteries, while on such houses as remained open she imposed a strict limitation to the number of monks. The closing of the monasteries was little short of a disaster in the more distant provinces of Russia, where they formed virtually the only cultural and charitable centers. But although the social work of the Church was grievously restricted, it never completely ceased.

The *Spiritual Regulation* makes lively reading, particularly in its comments on clerical behavior. We are told that priests and deacons “being drunk, bellow in the Streets, or what is worse, in their drink whoop and hollow in Church”; bishops are told to see that the clergy “walk not in a dronish lazy manner, nor lie down in the Streets to sleep, nor tipple in Cabacks, nor boast of the Strength of their Heads” (*The Spiritual Regulation*, translated by Thomas Consett in *The Present State and Regulations of the Church of Russia*, London, 1729, pp. 157-158). One fears that despite the efforts of the reforming movement in the previous century, these strictures were not entirely unjustified.

There is also some vivid advice to preachers:

A Preacher has no Occasion to shove and heave as tho' he was tugging at an Oar in a Boat. He has no need to clap his Hands, to set his Arms a Kimbo, nor to bounce or spring, nor to giggle and laugh, nor any Reason for Howlings and hideous Lamentations. For tho' he should be never so much griev'd in Spirit, yet ought he to suppress his Tears all he can, because these Emotions are all superfluous and indecent, and disturb an Audience (Consett, op. cit., p. 90. The picturesqueness of the style is due more to Consett than to his Russian original).

So much for the *Spiritual Regulation*. Peter's religious reforms naturally aroused opposition in Russia, but it was ruthlessly silenced. Outside Russia the redoubtable Dositheus made a vigorous protest; but the Orthodox Churches under Turkish rule were in no position to intervene effectively, and in 1723 the four ancient Patriarchates accepted the abolition of the Patriarchate of Moscow and recognized the constitution of the Holy Synod.

The system of Church government which Peter the Great established continued in force until 1917. The Synodical period in the history of Russian Orthodoxy is usually represented as a time of decline, with the Church in complete subservience to the State. Certainly a superficial glance at the eighteenth century would serve to confirm this verdict. It was an age of ill-advised westernization in Church art, Church music, and theology. Those who rebelled against the dry scholasticism of the theological academies turned, not to the teachings of Byzantium and ancient Russia, but to religious or pseudo-religious movements in the contemporary west: Protestant mysticism, German pietism, Freemasonry (Orthodox are strictly forbidden, on pain of excommunication, to become Freemasons), and the like. Prominent among the higher clergy were Court prelates such as Ambrose (Zertiss-Kamensky), Archbishop of Moscow and Kaluga, who at his death in 1771 left (among many other possessions) 252 shirts of fine linen and nine eye-glasses framed in gold.

But this is only one side of the picture in the eighteenth century. The Holy Synod, however objectionable its theoretical constitution, in practice governed efficiently. Reflective Churchmen were well aware of the defects in Peter's reforms, and submitted to them without necessarily agreeing with them. Theology was westernized, but standards of scholarship were high. Behind the façade of westernization, the true life of Orthodox Russia continued without interruption. Ambrose Zertiss-Kamensky represented one type of Russian bishop, but there were other bishops of a very different character, true monks and pastors, such as Saint Tikhon of Zadonsk (1724-1783), Bishop of Voronezh. A great preacher and a fluent writer, Tikhon is particularly

interesting as an example of one who, like most of his contemporaries, borrowed heavily from the west, but who remained at the same time firmly rooted in the classic tradition of Orthodox spirituality. He drew upon German and Anglican books of devotion; his detailed meditations upon the physical sufferings of Jesus are more typical of Roman Catholicism than of Orthodoxy; in his own life of prayer he underwent an experience similar to the Dark Night of the Soul, as described by western mystics such as Saint John of the Cross. But Tikhon was also close in outlook to Theodosius and Sergius, to Nilus and the Non-Possessors. Like so many Russian saints, both lay and monastic, he took a special delight in helping the poor, and he was happiest when talking with simple people — peasants, beggars, and even criminals.

The second part of the Synodical period, the nineteenth century, so far from being a period of decline, was a time of great revival in the Russian Church. Men turned away from religious and pseudo-religious movements in the contemporary west, and fell back once more upon the true spiritual forces of Orthodoxy. Hand in hand with this revival in the spiritual life went a new enthusiasm for missionary work, while in theology, as in spirituality, Orthodoxy freed itself from a slavish imitation of the west.

It was from Mount Athos that this religious renewal took its origin. A young Russian at the theological academy of Kiev, Paissy Velichkovsky (1722-1794), horrified by the secular tone of the teaching, fled to Mount Athos and there became a monk. In 1763 he went to Romania and became Abbot of the monastery of Niamets, which he made a great spiritual center, gathering round him more than 500 brethren. Under his guidance, the community devoted itself specially to the work of translating Greek Fathers into Slavonic. At Athos Paissy had learnt at first hand about the Hesychast tradition, and he was in close sympathy with his contemporary Nicodemus. He made a Slavonic translation of the *Philokalia*, which was published at Moscow in 1793. Paissy laid great emphasis upon the practice of continual prayer — above all the Jesus Prayer — and on the need for obedience to an elder or *starets*. He was deeply influenced by Nilus and the Non-Possessors, but he did not overlook the good elements in the Josephite form of monasticism: he allowed more place than Nilus had done to liturgical prayer and to social work, and in this way he attempted, like Sergius, to combine the mystical with the corporate and social aspect of the monastic life.

Paissy himself never returned to Russia, but many of his disciples traveled thither from Romania and under their inspiration a monastic revival spread across the land. Existing houses were reinvigorated, and many new foundations were made: in 1810 there were 452 monasteries in Russia, whereas in 1914 there were 1,025. This monastic movement, while outward-looking and concerned to serve the world, also restored to the center of the Church's life the tradition of the Non-Possessors, largely suppressed since the sixteenth century. It was marked in particular by a high development of the practice of spiritual direction. Although the "elder" has been a characteristic figure in many periods of Orthodox history, nineteenth-century Russia is *par excellence* the age of the *starets*.

The first and greatest of the *startsi* of the nineteenth century was Saint Seraphim of Sarov (1759-1833), who of all the saints of Russia is perhaps the most immediately attractive to non-Orthodox Christians. Entering the monastery of Sarov at the age of nineteen, Seraphim first spent sixteen years in the ordinary life of the community. Then he withdrew to spend the next twenty years in seclusion, living at first in a hut in the forest, then (when his feet swelled up and he could no longer walk with ease) enclosed in a cell in the monastery. This was his training for the office of eldership. Finally in 1815 he opened the doors of his cell. From dawn until evening he received all who came to him for help, healing the sick, giving advice, often supplying the an-

swer before his visitor had time to ask any questions. Sometimes scores or hundreds would come to see him in a single day. The outward pattern of Seraphim's life recalls that of Antony of Egypt fifteen centuries before: there is the same withdrawal in order to return. Seraphim is rightly regarded as a characteristically Russian saint, but he is also a striking example of how much Russian Orthodoxy has in common with Byzantium and the universal Orthodox tradition throughout the ages.

Seraphim was extraordinarily severe to himself (at one point in his life he spent a thousand successive nights in continual prayer, standing motionless throughout the long hours of darkness on a rock), but he was gentle to others, without ever being sentimental or indulgent. Asceticism did not make him gloomy, and if ever a saint's life was illuminated by joy, it was Seraphim's. He practiced the Jesus Prayer, and like the Byzantine Hesychasts he was granted the vision of the Divine and Uncreated Light. In Seraphim's case the Divine Light actually took a visible form, outwardly transforming his body. One of Seraphim's "spiritual children," Nicholas Motovilov, described what happened one winter day as the two of them were talking together in the forest. Seraphim had spoken of the need to acquire the Holy Spirit, and Motovilov asked how a man could be sure of "being in the Spirit of God":

Then Father Seraphim took me very firmly by the shoulders and said: "My son, we are both at this moment in the Spirit of God. Why don't you look at me?"

"I cannot look, Father," I replied, "because your eyes are flashing like lightning. Your face has become brighter than the sun, and it hurts my eyes to look at you."

"Don't be afraid," he said. "At this very moment you yourself have become as bright as I am. You yourself are now in the fullness of the Spirit of God; otherwise you would not be able to see me as you do."

Then bending his head towards me, he whispered softly in my ear: "Thank the Lord God for His infinite goodness towards us.... But why, my son, do you not look me in the eyes? Just look, and don't be afraid; the Lord is with us."

After these words I glanced at his face, and there came over me an even greater reverent awe. Imagine in the center of the sun, in the dazzling light of its midday rays, the face of a man talking to you. You see the movement of his lips and the changing expression of his eyes, you hear his voice, you feel someone holding your shoulders; yet you do not see his hands, you do not even see yourself or his body, but only a blinding light spreading far around for several yards and lighting up with its brilliance the snow-blanket which covers the forest glade and the snow-flakes which continue to fall unceasingly...

"What do you feel?" Father Seraphim asked me.

"An immeasurable well-being," I said.

"But what sort of well-being? How exactly do you feel well?"

"I feel such a calm," I answered, "such peace in my soul that no words can express it."

"This," said Father Seraphim, "is that peace of which the Lord said to His disciples: *'My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you'* [John 14:27], the peace which passes all understanding [Phil. 4:7]... What else do you feel?"

"Infinite joy in all my heart."

And Father Seraphim continued: “When the Spirit of God comes down to man and overshadows him with the fullness of His presence, then the man’s soul overflows with unspeakable joy, for the Holy Spirit fills with joy whatever He touches...” (*Conversation of Saint Seraphim on the Aim of the Christian Life*, printed in *A Wonderful Revelation to the World*, Jordanville, N.Y., 1953, pp. 23-25).

So the conversation continues. The whole passage is of extraordinary importance for understanding the Orthodox doctrine of deification and union with God. It shows how the Orthodox idea of sanctification includes the body: it is not Seraphim’s (or Motovilov’s) soul only, but the whole body which is transfigured by the grace of God. We may note that neither Seraphim nor Motovilov is in a state of ecstasy; both can talk in a coherent way and are still conscious of the outside world, but both are filled with the Holy Spirit and surrounded by the light of the age to come.

Seraphim had no teacher in the art of direction and he left no successor. After his death the work was taken up by another community, the hermitage of Optino. From 1829 until 1923, when the monastery was closed by the Bolsheviks, a succession of *startsi* ministered here, their influence extending like that of Seraphim over the whole of Russia. The best known of the Optino elders are Leonid (1768-1841), Macarius (1788-1860), and Ambrose (1812-1891). While these elders all belonged to the school of Paissy and were all devoted to the Prayer of Jesus, each of them had a strongly marked character of his own: Leonid, for example, was simple, vivid, and direct, appealing specially to peasants and merchants, while Macarius was highly educated, a Patristic scholar, a man in close contact with the intellectual movements of the day. Optino influenced a number of writers, including Gogol, Khomiakov, Dostoyevsky, Soloviev, and Tolstoy. (The story of Tolstoy’s relations with the Orthodox Church is extremely sad. In later life he publicly attacked the Church with great violence, and the Holy Synod after some hesitation excommunicated him [February 1901]. As he lay dying in the stationmaster’s house at Astapovo, one of the Optino elders traveled to see him, but was refused admittance by Tolstoy’s family). The remarkable figure of the elder Zossima in Dostoyevsky’s novel *The Brothers Karamazov* was based partly on Father Macarius or Father Ambrose of Optino, although Dostoyevsky says that he was inspired primarily by the life of Saint Tikhon of Zadonsk.

“There is one thing more important than all possible books and ideas,” wrote the Slavophil Ivan Kireyevsky, “to find an Orthodox *starets*, before whom you can lay each of your thoughts, and from whom you can hear not your own opinion, but the judgment of the Holy Fathers. God be praised, such *startsi* have not yet disappeared in Russia” (Quoted by Metropolitan Seraphim [of Berlin and Western Europe], *L’Eglise orthodoxe*, Paris, 1952, p. 219).

Through the *startsi*, the monastic revival influenced the life of the whole people. The spiritual atmosphere of the time is vividly expressed in an anonymous book, *The Way of a Pilgrim*, which describes the experiences of a Russian peasant who tramped from place to place practicing the Jesus Prayer. For those who know nothing of the Jesus Prayer, there can be no better introduction than this little work. *The Way of a Pilgrim* shows how the Prayer is not limited to monasteries, but can be used by everyone, in every form of life. As he traveled, the Pilgrim carried with him a copy of the *Philokalia*, presumably the Slavonic translation by Paissy. Bishop Theophan the Recluse (1815-1894) during the years 1876-1890 issued a greatly expanded translation of the *Philokalia* in five volumes, this time not in Slavonic but in Russian.

Hitherto we have spoken chiefly of the movement centering on the monasteries. But among the great figures of the Russian Church in the nineteenth century there was also a member of the married parish clergy, John Sergiev (1829-1908), usually known as Father John of Kronstadt,

because throughout his ministry he worked in the same place, Kronstadt, a naval base and suburb of Saint Petersburg. Father John is best remembered for his work as a parish priest — visiting the poor and the sick, organizing charitable work, teaching religion to the children of his parish, preaching continually, and above all praying with and for his flock. He had an intense awareness of the power of prayer, and as he celebrated the Liturgy he was entirely carried away: “He could not keep the prescribed measure of liturgical intonation: he called out to God; he shouted; he wept in the face of the visions of Golgotha and the Resurrection which presented themselves to him with such shattering immediacy” (Fedotov, *A Treasury of Russian Spirituality*, p. 348). The same sense of immediacy can be felt on every page of the spiritual autobiography which Father John wrote, *My Life in Christ*. Like Saint Seraphim, he possessed the gifts of healing, of insight, and of spiritual direction.

Father John insisted on frequent communion, although in Russia at this date it was very unusual for the laity to communicate more than four or five times a year. Because he had no time to hear individually the confessions of all who came for communion, he established a form of public confession, with everybody shouting their sins aloud simultaneously. He turned the iconostasis into a low screen, so that altar and celebrant might be visible throughout the service. In his emphasis on frequent communion and his reversion to the more ancient form of chancel screen, Father John anticipated liturgical developments in contemporary Orthodoxy. In 1964 he was proclaimed a saint by the Russian Church in Exile.

In nineteenth-century Russia there was a striking revival of missionary work. Since the days of Mitrophan of Sarai and Stephen of Perm, Russians had been active missionaries, and as Muscovite power advanced eastward, a great field was opened up for evangelism among the native tribes and among the Mohammedan Mongols. But although the Church never ceased to send out preachers to the heathen, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries missionary efforts had somewhat languished, particularly after the closing of monasteries by Catherine. But in the nineteenth century the missionary challenge was taken up with fresh energy and enthusiasm: the Academy of Kazan, opened in 1842, was specially concerned with missionary studies; native clergy were trained; the scriptures and the Liturgy were translated into a wide variety of languages. In the Kazan area alone the Liturgy was celebrated in twenty-two different languages or dialects.

It is significant that one of the first leaders in the missionary revival, Archimandrite Macarius (Glukharev, 1792-1847), was a student of Hesychasm and knew the disciples of Paisy Velichkovsky: the missionary revival had its roots in the revival of the spiritual life. The greatest of the nineteenth-century missionaries was Innocent (John Veniaminov, 1797-1879), Bishop of Kamchatka and the Aleutian Islands, who was proclaimed a saint in 1977. His diocese included some of the most inhospitable regions of the world; it extended across the Bering Straits to Alaska, which at that time belonged to Russia. Innocent played an important part in the development of American Orthodoxy, and millions of American Orthodox today can look on him as one of their chief “Apostles.”

In the field of theology, nineteenth-century Russia broke away from its excessive dependence upon the west. This was due chiefly to the work of Alexis Khomiakov (1804-1860), leader of the Slavophil circle and perhaps the first original theologian in the history of the Russian Church. A country landowner and a retired cavalry captain, Khomiakov belonged to the tradition of lay theologians which has always existed in Orthodoxy. Khomiakov argued that all western Christianity, whether Roman or Protestant, shares the same assumptions and betrays the same fundamental point of view, while Orthodoxy is something entirely distinct. Since this is so

(Khomiakov continued), it is not enough for Orthodox to borrow their theology from the west, as they had been doing since the seventeenth century; instead of using Protestant arguments against Rome, and Roman arguments against the Protestants, they must return to their own authentic sources, and rediscover the true Orthodox tradition, which in its basic presuppositions is neither Roman nor Reformed, but unique. As his friend G. Samarin put it, before Khomiakov “our Orthodox school of theology was not in a position to define either Latinism or Protestantism, because in departing from its own Orthodox standpoint, it had itself become divided into two, and each of these halves had taken up a position *opposed* indeed to its opponent, Latin or Protestant, but not *above* him. It was Khomiakov who first looked upon Latinism and Protestantism from the point of view *of the Church*, and therefore from a *higher* standpoint: and this is the reason why he was also able to define them” (Quoted in Birkbeck, *Russia and the English Church*, p. 14). Khomiakov was particularly concerned with the doctrine of the Church, its unity and authority; and here he made a lasting contribution to Orthodox theology.

Khomiakov during his lifetime exercised little or no influence on the theology taught in the academies and seminaries, but here too there was an increasing independence from the west. By 1900 Russian academic theology was at its height, and there were a number of theologians, historians, and liturgists, thoroughly trained in western academic disciplines, yet not allowing western influences to distort their Orthodoxy. In the years following 1900 there was also an important intellectual revival outside the theological schools. Since the time of Peter the Great, unbelief had been common among Russian “intellectuals,” but now a number of thinkers, by various routes, found their way back to the Church. Some were former Marxists, such as Sergius Bulgakov (1871-1944) (later ordained priest) and Nicholas Berdyaev (1874-1948), both of whom subsequently played a prominent part in the life of the Russian emigration in Paris.

When one reflects on the lives of Tikhon and Seraphim, on the Optino *startsi* and John of Kronstadt, on the missionary and theological work in nineteenth-century Russia, it can be seen how unfair it is to regard the Synodical period simply as a time of decline. One of the greatest of Russian Church historians, Professor Kartashev (1875-1960), has rightly said:

The subjugation was ennobled from within by Christian humility.... The Russian Church was suffering under the burden of the regime, but she overcame it from within. She grew, she spread and flourished in many different ways. Thus the period of the Holy Synod could be called the most brilliant and glorious period in the history of the Russian Church (Article in the periodical *The Christian East*, vol. XVI (1936), pp. 114 and 115).

On 15 August 1917, six months after the abdication of Emperor Nicholas II, when the Provisional Government was in power, an All-Russian Church Council was convened at Moscow, which did not finally disperse until September of the following year. More than half the delegates were laymen — the bishops and clergy present numbered 250, the laity 314 — but (as Canon Law demanded) the final decision on specifically religious questions was reserved to the bishops alone. The Council carried through a far-reaching program of reform, its chief act being to abolish the Synodical form of government established by Peter the Great, and to restore the Patriarchate. The election of the Patriarch took place on 5 November 1917. In a series of preliminary ballots, three candidates were selected; but the final choice among these three was made by lot. At the first ballot Antony (Khrapovitsky), Archbishop of Kharkov (1863-1936), came first with 101 votes; then Arsenius, Archbishop of Novgorod, with 27 votes; and thirdly Tikhon (Be-

liavin), Metropolitan of Moscow (1866-1925), with 23 votes. But when the lot was drawn, it was the last of these three candidates, Tikhon, who was actually chosen as Patriarch.

Outside events gave a note of urgency to the deliberations. At the earlier sessions members could hear the sound of Bolshevik artillery shelling the Kremlin, and two days before the election of the new Patriarch, Lenin and his associates gained full mastery of Moscow. The Church was allowed no time to consolidate the work of reform. Before the Council came to a close in the summer of 1918, its members learnt with horror of the brutal murder of Vladimir, Metropolitan of Kiev, by the Bolsheviks. Persecution had already begun.

## The twentieth century, Greeks and Arabs

**T**he Orthodox Church of today exists in two contrasting situations: outside the communist sphere lie the four ancient Patriarchates and Greece, under communism are the Slav Churches and Romania. Whereas communism only impinges upon the periphery of the Roman Catholic and the Protestant worlds, in the case of the Orthodox Church the vast majority of its members live in a communist state. At the present moment there are probably between sixty and ninety million practicing Orthodox — the number of baptized Orthodox is considerably higher — and of these more than eighty-five per cent are in communist countries.

Following this obvious line of division, in this chapter we shall consider the Orthodox Churches outside the communist bloc, and in the next the position of Orthodoxy in the “second world.” A third chapter is devoted to the Orthodox “dispersion” in other places, and to Orthodox missionary activities at the present time.

Of the seven Orthodox Churches not under communist rule, four — Constantinople, Greece, Cyprus, Sinai — are predominantly or exclusively Greek; one — Alexandria — is partly Greek, partly Arab and African; the remaining two — Antioch and Jerusalem — are mainly Arab, although at Jerusalem the higher administration of the Church is in Greek hands.

The [Patriarchate of Constantinople](#), which in the tenth century contained 624 dioceses, is today enormously reduced in size. At present within the Patriarch’s jurisdiction are: Turkey; Crete and various other islands in the Aegean; All Greeks of the dispersion, together with certain Russian, Ukrainian, Polish, and Albanian dioceses in emigration; Mount Athos and Finland.

This amounts in all to about three million persons, more than half of whom are Greeks dwelling in North America.

At the end of the First World War, Turkey contained a population of some 1,500,000 Greeks, but the greater part of these were either massacred or deported at the end of the disastrous Greco-Turkish War of 1922, and today (apart from the island of Imbros) the only place in Turkey where Greeks are allowed to live is Istanbul (Constantinople) itself. Even in Constantinople, Orthodox clergy (with the exception of the Patriarch) are forbidden to appear in the streets in clerical dress. The Greek community in the city has dwindled since the anti-Greek (and anti-Christian,) riot of 6 September 1955, when in a single night sixty out of the eighty Orthodox Churches at Constantinople were gutted or sacked, the total damage to Christian property being reckoned at £50,000,000. Since then, many Greeks have fled from fear or else have been forcibly

deported, and there is a grave danger that the Turkish government will eventually expel the Patriarchate. Athenagoras, Patriarch during 1948-1972 — indefatigable as a worker for Christian unity — and his successor Patriarch Dimitrios have shown great patience and dignity in this tragic situation.

The Patriarchate had a celebrated theological school on the island of Halki near Constantinople, which in the 1950s began to acquire a somewhat international character, with students not only from Greece but from the Near East in general. But unfortunately from 1971 onwards the Turkish authorities prevented the school from admitting any new students, and there is at present very little prospect that it will be reopened.

Mount Athos, like Halki, is not merely Greek but international. Of the twenty ruling monasteries, at the present day seventeen are Greek, one Russian, one Serbian, and one Bulgarian; in Byzantine times one of the twenty was Georgian, and there were also Latin houses. Besides the ruling monasteries there are several other large houses, and innumerable smaller settlements known as *sketes* or *kellia*; there are also hermits, most of whom live above alarming precipices at the southern tip of the peninsula, in huts or caves often accessible only by decaying ladders. Thus the three forms of the monastic life, dating back to fourth-century Egypt — the community life, the semi-eremitic life, and the hermits — continue side by side on the Holy Mountain today. It is a remarkable illustration of the continuity of Orthodoxy.

Athos faces many problems, the most obvious and serious being the spectacular decline in numbers. And it is likely that numbers will continue to decline, for the majority of the monks today are old men. Although there have been times in the past — for example, the early nineteenth century — when monks were even fewer than at present, yet the suddenness of the decrease in the past fifty years is most alarming.

In many parts of the Orthodox world today, and not least in certain circles in Greece itself, the monastic life is viewed with indifference and contempt, and this is in part responsible for the lack of new vocations on Athos. Another cause is the political situation: in 1903 more than half the monks were Slavs or Romanians, but after 1917 the supply of novices from Russia was cut off, while since 1945 the same has happened with Bulgaria and Romania. The Russian monastery of Saint Panteleimon, which in 1904 had 1,978 members, in 1959 numbered less than 60; the vast Russian *skete* of Saint Elias now has less than five monks, while that of Saint Andrew is entirely closed; the spacious buildings of Zographou, the Bulgarian house, are virtually deserted, and at the Romanian *skete* of Saint John the Baptist there is a mere handful of monks. In 1966, after prolonged negotiations, the Greek government eventually allowed five monks from the U.S.S.R. to enter Saint Panteleimon, and four monks from Bulgaria to enter Zographou: but clearly recruitment on a far vaster scale is necessary. Of the non-Greek communities, the Serbian monastery alone is in a slightly better position, as some young men have recently been allowed to come from Yugoslavia to be professed as monks.

In Byzantine times the Holy Mountain was a center of theological scholarship, but today most of the monks come from peasant families and have little education. This, though not a new situation, has certain unfortunate consequences. It would be sad indeed were Athos to modernize itself at the expense of the traditional and timeless values of Orthodox monasticism; but so long as the monasteries remain intellectually isolated, they cannot make their full (and very necessary) contribution to the life of the Church at large. There are signs that leaders on Athos are aware of the dangers of this isolation and are seeking ways to overcome it. The Athonite School of Theology was reopened in 1953, in the hope of attracting and training a somewhat different type of novice. Father Theoklitos, of the monastery of Dionysiou, goes regularly to Athens and Thessa-

lonica to speak at meetings, and has written an important book on the monastic life, *Between Heaven and Earth*, as well as a study of Saint Nicodemus of the Holy Mountain. Father Gabriel, for many years Abbot of Dionysiou, is also widely known and respected in Greece as a whole.

But it would be wrong to judge Athos or any other monastic center by numbers or literary output alone, for the true criterion is not size or scholarship but the quality of spiritual life. If in Athos today there are signs in some places of an alarming decadence, yet there can be no doubt that the Holy Mountain still continues to produce saints, ascetics, and men of prayer formed in the classic traditions of Orthodoxy. One such monk was Father Silvan (1866-1938), at the Russian monastery of Saint Panteleimon: of peasant background, a simple and humble man, his life was outwardly uneventful, but he left behind him some deeply impressive meditations, which have since been published in several languages (See Archimandrite Sophrony, *The Monk of Mount Athos and Wisdom from Mount Athos*, London, 1973-1974 [most valuable]). Another such monk was Father Joseph (died 1959), a Greek who lived in a semi-eremitic settlement — the New Skete — in the south of Athos, and gathered round him a group of monks who under his guidance practiced the continual recitation of the Jesus Prayer. So long as Athos numbers among its members men such as Silvan and Joseph, it is by no means failing in its task. (The text above describes the situation as it existed on Athos during 1960-1966. Since then there has been a notable improvement. Although the non-Greek monasteries have only been able to receive a few fresh recruits, in several Greek houses there has been a striking increase in numbers, and many of the new monks are gifted and well-educated. The revival is particularly evident in Simonos Petras, Philotheou, Grigoriou, and Stavronikita. In all of these monasteries there are outstanding abbots).

The Orthodox [Church of Finland](#) owes its origin to monks from the Russian monastery of Valamo on Lake Ladoga, who preached among the pagan Finnish tribes in Karelia during the Middle Ages. The Finnish Orthodox were dependent on the Russian Church until the Revolution, but since 1923 they have been under the spiritual care of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, although the Russian Church did not accept this situation until 1957. The vast majority of Finns are nominally Lutheran, and the 66,000 Orthodox comprise only \*\*\*1.5 percent of the population. There is an Orthodox seminary at Kuopio. “With its active youth, concerned with international and ecumenical contacts, anxious to appear a western and European community, while at the same time safeguarding its Orthodox traditions, the Church of Finland is perhaps destined to play an important role in the western witness of Orthodoxy” (J. Meyendorff, *L’Eglise orthodoxe hier et aujourd’hui*, Paris, 1960, p. 157).

The [Patriarchate of Alexandria](#) has been a small Church ever since the separation of the Monophysites in the fifth century, when the great majority of Christians in Egypt rejected the Council of Chalcedon. Today there are about 10,000 Orthodox in Egypt, and perhaps 150,000-250,000 elsewhere in Africa. The head of the Alexandrian Church is known officially as “Pope and Patriarch”: in Orthodox usage, the title “Pope” is not limited solely to the Bishop of Rome. The Patriarch and most of his clergy are Greek. The whole of the African continent falls under the charge of the Patriarch, and since Orthodox are just now beginning to undertake missionary work in Central Africa, it may well be that the ancient Church of Alexandria, however attenuated at present, will expand in new and unexpected ways during the years to come. (On missions in Africa, see Chapter 9.).

The [Patriarchate of Antioch](#) numbers some 320,000 Orthodox in Syria and the Lebanon, and perhaps a further 150,000 in Iraq and America. (Roman Catholics, Uniate and Latin, number about 640,000 in Syria and the Lebanon). The Patriarch, who lives in Damascus, has been an

Arab since 1899, but before that time he and the higher clergy were Greek, although the majority of the parish clergy and the people of the Antiochene Patriarchate were and are Arab.

Some thirty years ago a leading Orthodox in the Lebanon, Father (now Bishop) George Khodre, said: "Syria and the Lebanon form a dark picture among Orthodox countries." Indeed, until recently the Patriarchate of Antioch could without injustice be taken as a striking example of a "sleeping" Church. Today there are signs of an awakening, chiefly as a result of the Orthodox Youth Movement in the Patriarchate, most remarkable and inspiring organization, originally founded by a small group of students in 1941-1942. The Youth Movement runs catechism schools and Bible seminars, as well as issuing an Arabic periodical and other religious material. It undertakes social work, combating poverty and providing medical assistance. It encourages preaching and is attempting to restore frequent communion; and under its influence two all but outstanding religious communities have been founded at Tripoli and Deir-el-Harf. In the Youth Movement at Antioch, as in the "home missionary" movements of Greece, a leading part is played by the laity.

The [Patriarchate of Jerusalem](#) has always occupied a special position in the Church: never large in numbers, its primary task has been to guard the Holy Places. As at Antioch, Arabs form the majority of the people; they number today about 60,000 but are on the decrease, while before the war of 1948 there were only 5,000 Greeks within the Patriarchate and at present there are very much fewer (? not more than 500). But the Patriarch of Jerusalem is still a Greek, and the Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulchre, which looks after the Holy Places, is completely in Greek control.

Before the Bolshevik Revolution, a notable feature in the life of Orthodox Palestine was the annual influx of Russian pilgrims, and often there were more than 10,000 of them staying in the Holy City at the same time. For the most part they were elderly peasants, to whom this pilgrimage was the most notable event in their lives: after a walk of perhaps several thousand miles across Russia, they took ship at the Crimea and endured a voyage of what to us today must seem unbelievable discomfort, arriving at Jerusalem if possible in time for Easter (See Stephen Graham, *With the Russian Pilgrims to Jerusalem*, London, 1913. The author traveled himself with the pilgrims, and gives a revealing picture of Russian peasants and their religious outlook). The Russian Spiritual Mission in Palestine, as well as looking after the Russian pilgrims, did most valuable pastoral work among the Arab Orthodox and maintained a large number of schools. This Russian Mission has naturally been sadly reduced in size since 1917, but has not entirely disappeared, and there are still three Russian convents at Jerusalem; two of them receive Arab girls as novices.

The [Church of Greece](#) continues to occupy a central place in the life of the country as a whole. Writing in the early 1950s, a sympathetic Anglican observer remarked: "Hellas, when all is said as to the spread of secularism and indifference, remains a Christian nation in a sense of which we in the west can have but little conception" (Hammond, *The Waters of Marah*, p. 25). In the 1951 census, out of a total population of 7,632,806, the Orthodox numbered 7,472,559 other Christians no more than 41,107; in addition there were 112,665 Mohammedans, 6,325 Jews, 29 persons of other religions, and 121 atheists. Today there is much more indifference than in the 1950s, and the Socialist government elected in 1981 began to take steps towards a separation of Church and State; but the Church remains deeply influential.

Greek dioceses of today, as in the primitive Church, are small: there are 78 (contrast Russia before 1917, with 67 dioceses for 100 million faithful) and in north Greece many dioceses contain less than 100 parishes. In ideal and often in reality, the Greek bishop is not merely a distant administrator, but an accessible figure with whom his flock can have personal contact, and in

whom the poor and simple freely confide, calling daily in large numbers for practical as well as spiritual advice. The Greek bishop delegates far less to his parish clergy than a bishop in the west, and in particular he still reserves to himself much of the task of preaching, though he is assisted in this by a small staff of monks or educated laymen, working under his direction.

Thus by no means all the married parish clergy of Greece in the past preached sermons; nor is this surprising, since few had received a regular theological training. In pre-Revolutionary Russia all parish priests had passed through a theological seminary, but in Greece in the year 1920, of 4,500 married clergy, less than 1,000 had received more than an ordinary elementary school education. Hitherto the priest of the Greek countryside has been closely integrated with the local community: usually he is a native of the village which he serves; after ordination, as well as being priest, he still continues with his previous work, whatever that may be — carpentry, shoemaking, or more commonly farming; he is not a man of higher learning than the laity round him; very possibly he has never attended a seminary. This system has had certain undeniable advantages, and in particular it has meant that the Greek Church has avoided a cultural gulf between pastor and people, such as has existed in England for several centuries. But with the rise in educational standards in Greece during recent years, a change in this system has become necessary: today priests clearly need a more specialized training, and it seems likely that henceforward most, if not all, Greek ordinands will be sent to study in a seminary.

The two older universities of Greece, at Athens and Thessalonica, both contain Faculties of Theology. Non-Orthodox are often surprised to find that the great majority of professors in both faculties are laymen, and that most of the students have no intention of being ordained; but Orthodox consider it entirely natural that the laity as well as the clergy should take an interest in theology. Many students afterwards teach religion in secondary schools, and it is usually the local schoolmasters whom the bishops choose as their lay preachers. Only a few of these students become parish clergy; a few others are professed as monks, though it is likely that only a minority of these graduate monks will live as resident members of a monastery: in most cases they will work on the bishop's staff, or perhaps become preachers.

The theological professors of Greece have produced a considerable body of important work during the past half century: one thinks at once of Chrestos Androutsos, author of a famous *Dogmatic Theology* first published in 1907, and more recently of men such as P. N. Trembelas, P. I. Bratsiotis, I. N. Karmiris, B. Ioannides, and Ieronymos Kotsonis, the recent Archbishop of Athens, an expert on Canon Law. But while fully acknowledging the notable achievements of modern Greek theology, one cannot deny that it possesses certain shortcomings. Many Greek theological writings, particularly if compared with work by members of the Russian emigration, seem a little arid and academic in tone. The situation mentioned in an earlier chapter has continued to the present century, and most Greek theologians have studied for a time at a foreign university, usually in Germany; and sometimes German religious thought seems to have influenced their work at the expense of their own Orthodox tradition. Theology in Greece today suffers from the divorce between the monasteries and the intellectual life of the Church: it is a theology of the university lecture room, but not a mystical theology, as in the days of Byzantium when theological scholarship flourished in the monastic cell as well as in the university. Nevertheless in Greece at the present time there are encouraging signs of a more flexible approach to theology, and of a living recovery of the spirit of the Fathers.

What of the monastic life? In male communities, the shortage of young monks is as alarming on the mainland of Greece as it was on Athos until recently, and many houses are in danger of being closed altogether. There are very few educated men in the communities. But this

gloomy prospect is relieved by striking exceptions, such as the recently founded monastery of the Paraclete at Oropos (Attica). Some older communities still attract novices — for example, Saint John the Evangelist on the island of Patmos (under the Ecumenical Patriarch). In Meteora some notable efforts to revive the monastic life were made by the late Metropolitan Dionysius of Trikkala. Here there are a series of monastic houses, perched on rocky pinnacles in a remote part of Thessaly, which were partially repopulated in the 1960s by young and well-educated monks. But the constant flow of tourists rendered monastic life impossible, and in the 1970s almost all the monks moved to Mount Athos.

But while the situation of male communities is often critical, the female communities are in a far more lively condition, and the number of nuns is rapidly increasing. Some of the most active convents are of quite recent origin, such as the Convent of the Holy Trinity on Aegina, dating from 1904, whose founder, Nektarios (Kephalas), Metropolitan of Pentapolis (1846-1920), has already been canonized; or the Convent of Our Lady of Help at Chios, established in 1928, which now has fifty members. The Convent of the Annunciation at Patmos, started in 1936 by Father Amphiloichios (died 1970; perhaps the greatest *pneumatikos* or spiritual father in post-war Greece), already has two daughter houses, at Rhodes and Kalymnos. (In this connection one must also mention the impressive Old Calendarist Convent of Our Lady at Keratea in Attica, founded in 1925, which now has between two and three hundred nuns. On the Old Calendarists, see p. 309).

In the past twenty years a surprising number of classic works of monastic spirituality have been reprinted in Greece, including a new edition of the *Philokalia*. It seems that there is a revived interest in the ascetic and spiritual treasures of Orthodoxy, a development which bodes well for the future of the monasteries.

Religious art in Greece is undergoing a most welcome transformation. The debased westernized style, universal at the beginning of the present century, has largely been abandoned in favor of the older Byzantine tradition. A number of churches at Athens and elsewhere have recently been decorated with a full scheme of icons and frescoes, executed in strict conformity with the traditional rules. The leader of this artistic renewal, Photius Kontoglou (1896-1965), was noted for his uncompromising advocacy of Byzantine art. Typical of his outlook is his comment on the art of the Italian Renaissance: “Those who see in a secular way say that it progressed, but those who see in a religious way say that it declined” (C. Cavarnos, *Byzantine Sacred Art: Selected Writings of the contemporary Greek icon painter Fotis Kontoglous*, New York, 1957, p. 21).

Greece possesses an Orthodox counterpart to Lourdes: the island of Tinos, where in 1823 a miracle-working icon of the Virgin and Child was discovered, buried underground in the foundations of a ruined church. A large pilgrimage shrine stands today on the site, which is visited in particular by the sick, and many cases of miraculous healing have occurred. There are always great crowds on the island for the Feast of the Assumption (15 August).

In the Greek Church of the present century there has been a striking development of “home missionary” movements, devoted to evangelistic and educational work. *Apostoliki Diakonia* (“Apostolic Service”), the official organization concerned with the “Home Mission,” was founded in 1930. Alongside it there are a number of parallel movements which, while cooperating with the bishops and other Church authorities, spring from private initiative — *Zoe*, *Sotir*, the *Orthodox Christian Unions*, and others. The oldest, most influential, and most controversial of these movements, *Zoe* (“Life”), also known as the “Brotherhood of Theologians,” was started by Father Eusebius Matthopoulos in 1907. It is in fact a kind of semi-monastic order, since all its members must be unmarried, although they take no formal vows and are free to leave the Brotherhood at any time. About a quarter of the Brotherhood are monks (none of whom live regularly in a monastery) and the rest laymen. One wonders how far *Zoe*, with its monastic structure,

points the way to future developments in the Orthodox Church. In the past the primary task of an eastern monk has been prayer; but, besides this traditional type of monasticism, is there not also room in Orthodoxy for “active” religious orders, parallel to the Dominicans and Franciscans in the west, and dedicated to the work of evangelism in the world?

These “home missionary” movements, especially *Zoe*, lay great stress on Bible study and encourage frequent communion. Between them they publish an impressive number of periodicals and books, with a very wide circulation. Under their leadership and guidance there exist today about 9,500 catechism schools (in 1900 there were few if any such schools in Greece), and it is reckoned that fifty-five per cent of Greek children — in some parishes a far higher proportion — regularly attend catechism classes. Besides these schools, a wide program of youth work is undertaken: “The period of adolescence,” to quote an Anglican writer, “when so overwhelming a portion of our own children lose all vital contact with the Church, is commonly that at which the young Greek Christian begins to play an active part in the life of his local community” (P. Hammond, *The Waters of Marah*, p. 133).

The influence of these “home missionary” movements has declined considerably in the 1900s and 1970s, and in particular the words just quoted — written more than twenty-five years ago — unfortunately would need today to be qualified.

The ancient [Church of Cyprus](#), independent since the Council of Ephesus (431), has at present 600 priests and over 450,000 faithful. The Turkish system, whereby the head of the Church is also the civil leader of the Greek population, was continued by the British when they took over the island in 1878. This explains the double part, both political and religious, played by Makarios, the recent head of the Cypriot Church, “ethnarch” and President as well as Archbishop.

The [Church of Sinai](#) is in some ways a “freak” in the Orthodox world, consisting as it does in a single monastery, Saint Catherine’s, at the foot of the Mountain of Moses. There is some disagreement about whether the monastery should be termed an “autocephalous” or merely an “autonomous” Church (see p. 314). The abbot, who is always an archbishop, is elected by the monks and consecrated by the Patriarch of Jerusalem; the monastery is entirely independent of outside control. Sad to say, there are today fewer than twenty monks.

## Western Orthodoxy

Let us look briefly at the Orthodox communities in western Europe and in North America. In 1922 the Greeks created an Exarchate for western Europe, with its center in London. The first Exarch, Metropolitan Germanos (1872-1951), was widely known for his work for Christian unity, and played a leading part in the Faith and Order Movement between the ‘wars. In 1963 this Exarchate was divided into four separate dioceses, with bishops at London, Paris, Bonn, and Vienna; further dioceses were later formed in Scandinavia and Belgium, and most recently of all (1982) in Switzerland. There are about 130 Greek parishes in western Europe with permanent churches and resident clergy, and in addition a number of smaller Church groups.

The chief centers of Russian Orthodoxy in western Europe are Munich and Paris. At Paris the celebrated Theological Institute of Saint Sergius (under the Paris jurisdiction of Russians), founded in 1925, has acted as an important point of contact between Orthodox and non-Orthodox. Particularly during the inter-war period, the Institute numbered among its professors

an extraordinarily brilliant group of scholars. Those formerly or at present on the staff of Saint Sergius include Archpriest Sergius Bulgakov (1871-1944), the first Rector; Bishop Cassian (1892-1965), his successor; A. Kartashev (1875-1960), G.P. Fedotov (1886-1951), P. Evdokimov (1901-1970), Father Boris Bobrinsky and the Frenchman, Olivier Clément. Three professors, Fathers Georges Florovsky, Alexander Schmemmann, and John Meyendorff, moved to America, where they played a decisive role in the development of American Orthodoxy. A list of books and articles published by teachers at the Institute between 1925 and 1947 runs to ninety-two pages, and includes seventy full-scale books — a remarkable achievement, rivaled by the staffs of few theological academies (however large) in any Church. Saint Sergius is also noted for its choir, which has done much to revive the use of the ancient ecclesiastical chants of Russia. Almost entirely Russian between the two wars, the Institute now draws the majority of its students from other nationalities: in 1981, for example, of the thirty-four students, there were seven Russians (all except one brought up in France), seven Greeks, five Serbs, one Georgian, one Romanian, seven French, two Belgians, two from Africa, and one each from Holland and Israel. Courses are now mainly in French.

In western Europe during the post-war period there has also been an active group of Orthodox theologians belonging to the Moscow Patriarchate, including Vladimir Lossky (1903-1958), Archbishop Basil (Kriwocheine) of Brussels, Archbishop Alexis (van der Mensbrugge) (1899-1980) and Archbishop Peter (l'Huillier) (now in the U.S.A.), the last two being converts to Orthodoxy. Another convert, the Frenchman Father Lev (Gillet) (1892-1980), a priest of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, wrote many books as "A Monk of the Eastern Church."

Several Russian monasteries exist in Germany and France. The largest is the women's monastery dedicated to the Lesna icon of the Mother of God, at Provemont in Normandy (Russian Church in Exile); there is a smaller monastery for women at Bussy-en-Othe, in Yonne (Russian Archdiocese of Western Europe). In Great Britain there is the Monastery of Saint John the Baptist at Tolleshunt Knights, Essex (Ecumenical Patriarchate), founded by Archimandrite Sophrony, a disciple of Father Silvan of Mount Athos, with Russian, Greek, Romanian, German and Swiss monks, and with a women's community nearby. There are also the Convent of the Annunciation in London (Russian Church in Exile), with a Russian abbess and Arab sisters, and a few smaller foundations elsewhere.

In North America there are between two and three million Orthodox, subdivided into at least fifteen national or jurisdictional groups, and with a total of more than forty bishops. Before the First World War the Orthodox of America, whatever their nationality, looked to the Russian Archbishop for leadership and pastoral care, since among the Orthodox nations it was the Russians who first established churches in the New World. Eight monks, chiefly from Valamo on Lake Ladoga, originally arrived in Alaska in 1794: one on these, Father Herman of Spruce Island, was canonized in 1970. The work in Alaska was greatly encouraged by Innocent Veniaminov, who worked in Alaska and Eastern Siberia from 1823 to 1868, first as a priest and then as bishop. He translated Saint Mathew's Gospel, the Liturgy, and a catechism into Aleutian. In 1845 he created a seminary at Sitka in Alaska, and in 1859 an auxiliary bishopric was set up there, which became an independent missionary see when Alaska was sold to the U.S. in 1867. In Alaska today, out of a total population of 200,000, there are perhaps 20,000 Orthodox, most of whom are natives; the seminary was reopened in 1973.

Meanwhile in the second part of the nineteenth century, numbers of Orthodox began to settle outside Alaska in other parts of North America. In 1872 the diocese was transferred from Sitka to San Francisco, and in 1905 to New York, although an auxiliary bishop was still attached

to Alaska. At the turn of the century, the number of Orthodox was greatly increased by a group of Uniate parishes which was reconciled to Orthodoxy. The future Patriarch Tikhon was Archbishop of North America for nine years (1898-1907). After 1917, when relations with the Church of Russia became confused, each national group formed itself into a separate organization and the present multiplicity of jurisdictions arose. Many see, in Moscow's grant of autocephaly to the OCA, a hopeful first step towards the restoration of Orthodox unity in America.

The Greek Orthodox in North America number over one million, with more than 400 parishes. They are headed by Archbishop Jakovos, who presides over a synod of ten bishops (one lives in Canada, and another in South America). The Greek Theological School of the Holy Cross at Boston has some 110 students, most of them candidates for the priesthood. The bishops in the Greek Archdiocese in America have come in most cases from Greece, but almost all the parish clergy were born and brought up in the U.S.A. There are two or three small monasteries in the Greek Archdiocese; the much larger Monastery of the Transfiguration at Boston, Mass., originally under the Greeks, is now within the Russian Church in Exile.

The Russians have four theological seminaries in America: Saint Vladimir's in New York and Saint Tikhon's in South Canaan, Pennsylvania (both of these belong to the OCA); Holy Trinity Seminary at Jordanville, N.Y. (Russian Church in Exile); and Christ the Saviour Seminary in Johnstown, Pennsylvania (Carpatho-Russian diocese). There are several Russian monasteries, the largest being Holy Trinity, Jordanville, with thirty monks and ten novices. The monastery, as well as maintaining a seminary for theological students, has an active printing press, which produces liturgical books in Church Slavonic, and other books and periodicals in Russian or English. The monks also farm, and have built their own church, decorated by two members of the community with icons and frescoes in the best tradition of Russian religious art.

Orthodox life in America today displays a most encouraging vitality. New parishes are continually being formed and new churches built. In some places there is a shortage of priests, but whereas a generation ago Orthodox clergy in America were often ordained hastily, with little training, today in almost every jurisdiction most if not all ordinands have a theological degree. Orthodox theologians in America are few and often overworked, but their number is gradually increasing. Holy Cross and Saint Vladimir's both produce substantial periodicals in the English language.

The chief problem which confronts American Orthodoxy is that of nationalism and its place in the life of the Church. Among members of many jurisdictions there is a strong feeling that the present subdivision into national groups is hindering both the internal development of Orthodoxy in America and its witness before the outside world. There is a danger that excessive nationalism will alienate the younger generation of Orthodox from the Church. This younger generation have known no country but America, their interests are American, their primary (often their only) language is English: will they not drift away from Orthodoxy, if their Church insists on worshipping in a foreign tongue, and acts as a repository for cultural relics of the "old country"?

Such is the problem, and many would say that there is only one ultimate solution: to form a single and autocephalous "American Orthodox Church." This vision of an American autocephalous Church has its most ardent advocates in the OCA, which sees itself as the nucleus of such a Church, and among the Syrians. But there are others, especially among the Greeks, the Serbs, and the Russian Church in Exile, who view with reserve this emphasis upon *American* Orthodoxy. They are deeply conscious of the value of the Christian civilizations developed over many centuries by the Greek and Slavonic peoples, and they feel that it would be a disastrous impoverishment for the younger generation, if their Church were to sacrifice this great inheritance and to

become completely “Americanized.” Yet can the good elements in the national traditions be preserved, without at the same time obscuring the universality of Orthodoxy?

Most of those who favor unification are of course alive to the importance of national traditions, and realize the dangers to which the Orthodox minority in America would be exposed if it cut itself off from its national roots and became immersed in the secularized culture of contemporary America. They feel that the best policy is for Orthodox parishes at present to be “bilingual,” holding services both in the language of the Mother Country and in English. In fact, this “bilingual” situation is now becoming usual in many parts of America. All jurisdictions in principle allow the use of the English language at services and in practice are coming to employ it more and more; English is particularly common in the OCA and the Syrian Archdiocese. For a long time the Greeks, anxious to preserve their Hellenic heritage as a living reality, insisted that the Greek language alone should be used at all services; but in the 1970s this situation changed, and in many parishes English is now employed almost as much as Greek.

Over the past few years there have been increasing signs of cooperation between national groups. In 1954 the Council of Eastern Orthodox Youth Leaders of America was formed, in which the majority of Orthodox youth organizations participate. Since 1960 a committee of Orthodox bishops, representing most (but not all) the national jurisdictions, has been meeting in New York under the presidency of the Greek Archbishop (this committee existed before the war, but had fallen into abeyance over many years). So far this committee, known as the “Standing Conference” or “SCOBA,” has not been able to contribute as much to Orthodox unity as was originally hoped. The grant of autocephaly to the OCA gave rise at the time to sharp controversy, and the underlying problems thus created remain as yet unsolved; but in practice inter-Orthodox collaboration still continues.

A small minority in an alien environment, the Orthodox of the diaspora have found it a hard task even to ensure their survival. But some of them, at any rate, realize that besides mere survival they have a wider task. If they really believe the Orthodox faith to be the true Catholic faith, they cannot cut themselves off from the non-Orthodox majority around them, but they have a duty to tell others what Orthodoxy is. They must bear witness before the world. The diaspora has a “missionary” vocation. As the Synod of the Russian Church in Exile said in its Letter of October 1953, Orthodox have been scattered across the world with God’s permission, so that they can “announce to all peoples the true Orthodox faith and prepare the world for the Second Coming of Christ” (This emphasis on the Second Coming will surprise many Christians of the present day, but it would not have seemed strange to Christians in the first century. The events of the last fifty years have led to a strong eschatological consciousness in many Russian Orthodox circles).

What does this mean for Orthodox? It does not of course imply proselytism in the bad sense. But it means that Orthodox — without sacrificing anything good in their national traditions — need to break away from a narrow and exclusive nationalism: they must be ready to present their faith to others, and must not behave as if it were something restricted to Greeks or Russians, and of no relevance to anybody else. They must rediscover the universality of Orthodoxy.

If Orthodox are to present their faith effectively to other people, two things are necessary. First, they need to understand their own faith better: thus the fact of the diaspora has forced Orthodox to examine themselves and to deepen their own Orthodoxy. Secondly, they need to understand the situation of those to whom they speak: Without abandoning their Orthodoxy, they *must enter into the experience* of other Christians, seeking to appreciate the distinctive outlook of western Christendom, its past history and present difficulties. They must take an active part in the intellectual and religious movements of the contemporary west — in Biblical research, in the

Patristic revival, in the Liturgical Movement, in the movement towards Christian unity, in the many forms of Christian social action. They need to “be present” in these movements, making their special Orthodox contribution, and at the same time through their participation learning more about their own tradition.

It is normal to speak of “Eastern Orthodoxy.” But many Orthodox in Europe or America now regard themselves as citizens of the countries where they have settled; they and their children, born and brought up in the west, consider themselves not “eastern” but “western.” Thus a “Western Orthodoxy” has come into existence. Besides born Orthodox, this Western Orthodoxy includes a small but growing number of converts (almost a third of the clergy of the Syrian Archdiocese in America are converts). Most of these Western Orthodox use the Byzantine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom (the normal Communion Service of the Orthodox Church) in French, English, German, Dutch, Spanish, or Italian. There are, for example, a number of French and German Orthodox parishes, as well as (under the Patriarchate of Moscow) a Dutch Orthodox Mission — all of them following the Byzantine rite. But some Orthodox feel that Western Orthodoxy, to be truly itself, should use specifically western forms of prayer — not the Byzantine Liturgy, but the old Roman or Gallican Liturgies. People often talk about “the Orthodox Liturgy” when they mean the Byzantine Liturgy, as if that and that alone were Orthodox; but they should not forget that the ancient Liturgies of the west, dating back to the first ten centuries, also have their place in the fullness of Orthodoxy.

This conception of a western-rite Orthodoxy has not remained merely a theory. The Orthodox Church of the present day contains an equivalent to the Uniate movement in the Church of Rome. In 1937, when a group of former Old Catholics in France under Monsignor Louis-Charles Winnaert (1880-1937) were received into the Orthodox Church, they were allowed to retain the use of the western rite. This group was originally in the jurisdiction of the Moscow Patriarchate, and was for many years headed by Bishop Jean de S. Denys (Evgraph Kovalevsky) (1905-1970). At present it is under the Church of Romania. There are several small western-rite Orthodox groups in the U.S.A. Various experimental Orders of the Mass for use by western-rite Orthodox have been drawn up, in particular by Archbishop Alexis (van der Mensbrugge).

In the past the different autocephalous Churches — often through no fault of their own — have been too much isolated from one another. At times the only formal contact has been the regular exchange of letters between the heads of Churches. Today this isolation still continues, but both in the diaspora and in the older Orthodox Churches there is a growing desire for cooperation. Orthodox participation in the World Council of Churches has played its part here: at the great gatherings of the “Ecumenical Movement,” the Orthodox delegates from different autocephalous Churches have found themselves ill-prepared to speak with a united voice. Why, they have asked, does it require the World Council of Churches to bring us Orthodox together? Why do we ourselves never meet to discuss our common problems? The urgent need for cooperation is also felt by many Orthodox youth movements, particularly in the diaspora. Valuable work has been done here by *Syndesmos*, an international organization founded in 1953, in which Orthodox youth groups of many different countries collaborate.

In the attempts at cooperation a leading part is naturally played by the senior hierarch of the Orthodox Church, the Ecumenical Patriarch. After the First World War the Patriarchate of Constantinople contemplated gathering a “Great Council” of the whole Orthodox Church, and as a first step towards this, plans were made for a “Pro-Synod” which was to prepare the agenda for the Council. A preliminary Inter-Orthodox Committee met on Mount Athos in 1930, but the Pro-

Synod itself never materialized, largely owing to obstruction from the Turkish government. Around 1950 the Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras revived the idea, and after repeated postponements a “Pan-Orthodox Conference” eventually met at Rhodes in September 1961. Further Pan-Orthodox Conferences have met at Rhodes (1963, 1964) and Geneva (1968, 1976, 1982). The chief items on the agenda of the “Great Council,” when and if it eventually meets, will probably be the problems of Orthodox disunity in the west, the relations of Orthodoxy with other Christian Churches (“ecumenism”), and the application of Orthodox moral teaching in the modern world.

## Missions

We have already spoken of the missionary witness of the diaspora, but it remains to say something of Orthodox missionary work in the stricter sense of preaching to the heathen. Since the time of Joseph de Maistre it has been fashionable in the west to say that Orthodoxy is not a missionary Church. Certainly Orthodox have often failed to perceive their missionary responsibilities; yet de Maistre’s charge is not entirely just. Anyone who reflects on the mission of Cyril and Methodius, on the work of their disciples in Bulgaria and Serbia, and on the story of Russia’s conversion, will realize that Byzantium can claim missionary achievements as great as those of Celtic or Roman Christianity in the same period. Under Turkish rule it became impossible to undertake missionary work of an open kind; but in Russia, where the Church remained free, missions continued uninterrupted — although there were periods of diminished activity — from Stephen of Perm (and even before) to Innocent of Kamchatka and the beginnings of the twentieth century. It is easy for a westerner to forget how vast a missionary field the Russian continent embraced. Russian missions extended outside Russia, not only to Alaska (of which we have spoken already), but to China, Japan, and Korea.

What of the present? Under the Bolsheviks, as under the Turks, open missionary work is impossible. But the missions founded by Russia in China, Japan, and Korea still exist, while a new Orthodox mission has shot up suddenly and spontaneously in Central Africa. At the same time both the Orthodox in America and the older Churches in the eastern Mediterranean, who do not suffer from the same disabilities as their brethren in communist countries, are beginning to show a new missionary awareness.

The Chinese mission at Peking was set up in 1715, and its origins go back earlier still, to 1686, when a group of Cossacks entered service in the Chinese Imperial Guard and took their chaplain with them. Mission work, however, was not undertaken on any scale until the end of the nineteenth century, and by 1914 there were still only some 5,000 converts, although there were already Chinese priests and a seminary for Chinese theological students. (It has been the constant policy of Orthodox missions to build up a native clergy as quickly as possible). After the 1917 Revolution, so far from ceasing, missionary work increased considerably, since a large number of Russian *émigrés*, including many clergy, fled eastward from Siberia. In China and Manchuria in 1939 there were 200,000 Orthodox (mostly Russians, but including some converts) with five bishops and an Orthodox university at Harbin.

Since 1945 the situation has changed utterly. The communist government in China, when it ordered all non-Chinese missionaries to leave the country, gave no preferential treatment to the Russians: the Russian clergy, together with most of the faithful, have either been “repatriated” to the U.S.S.R., or have escaped to America. In the 1950s there was at least one Chinese Orthodox bishop, with some 20,000 faithful; how much of Chinese Orthodoxy survives today it is difficult to tell. Since 1957 the Chinese Church, despite its small size, has been autonomous; since the

Chinese government allows no foreign missions, this is probably the only means whereby it can hope to survive. Isolated in Red China, this tiny Orthodox community has a thorny path before it.

The Japanese Orthodox Church was founded by Father (later Archbishop) Nicholas Kassatkin (1836-1912), canonized in 1970. Sent in 1861 to serve the Russian Consulate in Japan, he decided from the start to work not only among Russians but among Japanese, and after a time he devoted himself exclusively to missionary work. He baptized his first convert in 1868, and four years later two Japanese Orthodox were ordained priests. Curiously enough, the first Japanese Orthodox bishop, John Ono (consecrated 1941), a widower, was son-in-law to the first Japanese convert. After a period of discouragement between the two World Wars, Orthodoxy in Japan is now reviving. There are today about forty parishes, with 25,000 faithful. The seminary at Tokyo, closed in 1919, was reopened in 1954. Practically all the clergy are Japanese, but one of the two bishops is American. There is a small but steady stream of converts — about 200-300 in each year, mostly young people in their twenties or thirties, some with higher education. The Orthodox Church in Japan is autonomous or self-governing in its internal life, while remaining under the general spiritual care of its Mother Church, the Moscow Patriarchate. Though limited in numbers, it can justly claim to be no longer a foreign mission but an indigenous Church of the Japanese people.

The Russian mission in Korea, founded in 1898, has always been on a much smaller scale. The first Korean Orthodox priest was ordained in 1912. In 1934 there were 820 Orthodox in Korea, but today there would seem to be less. The mission suffered in 1950 during the Korean civil war, when the church was destroyed; but it was rebuilt in 1953, and a larger church was constructed in 1967. At present the mission is under the charge of the Greek diocese of New Zealand.

Besides these Asian Orthodox Churches, there is now an exceedingly lively African Orthodox Church in Uganda and Kenya. Entirely indigenous from the start, African Orthodoxy did not arise through the preaching of missionaries from the traditional Orthodox lands, but was a spontaneous movement among Africans themselves. The founders of the African Orthodox movement were two native Ugandans, Rauben Sebanja Mukasa Spartas (born 1899, bishop 1972, died 1982) and his friend Obadiah Kabanda Basajjakitalo. Originally brought up as Anglicans, they were converted to Orthodoxy in the 1920s, not as a result of personal contact with other Orthodox, but through their own reading and study. Over the past forty years Rauben and Obadiah have energetically preached their new-found faith to their fellow Africans, building up a community which, according to some reports, numbers more than 100,000, mostly in Kenya. In 1982, after the death of Bishop Rauben, there were two African bishops.

At first the canonical position of Ugandan Orthodoxy was in some doubt, as originally Rauben and Obadiah established contact with an organization emanating from the United States, the "African Orthodox Church," which, though using the title "Orthodox," has in fact no connection with the true and historical Orthodox communion. In 1932 they were both ordained by a certain Archbishop Alexander of this Church, but towards the end of that same year they became aware of the dubious status of the "African Orthodox Church," whereupon they severed all relations with it and approached the Patriarchate of Alexandria. But only in 1946, when Rauben visited Alexandria in person, did the Patriarch formally recognize the African Orthodox community in Uganda, and definitely take it under his care. In recent years the bond with Alexandria has been considerably strengthened, and since 1959 one of the Metropolitans of the Patriarchate — a Greek — has been charged with special responsibility for missionary work in Central Africa. African Orthodox have been sent to study theology in Greece, and since 1960 more than eighty Af-

ricans have been y ordained as deacons and priests (until that year, the only .priests were the two founders themselves). In 1982 a seminary for training priests was opened at Nairobi. Many African Orthodox have high ambitions, and are anxious to cast their net still wider. In the words of Father Spartas: “And, methinks, that in no time this Church is going to embrace all the Africans at large and thereby become one of the leading Churches in Africa” (Quoted in F. B. Welbourn, *East African Rebels*, London, 1961, p. 83; this book gives a critical but not unsympathetic account of Orthodoxy in Uganda). The rise of Orthodoxy in Uganda has of course to be seen against the background of African nationalism: one of the obvious attractions of Orthodox Christianity in Ugandan eyes is the fact that it is entirely unconnected with the colonial regimes of the past hundred years. Yet, despite certain political undertones, Orthodoxy in Central Africa is a genuinely religious movement.

The enthusiasm with which these Africans have embraced Orthodoxy has caught the imagination of the Orthodox world at large, and has helped to arouse missionary interest in many places. Paradoxically, in Africa hitherto it has been the Africans who have taken the initiative and converted themselves to Orthodoxy. Perhaps the Orthodox, encouraged by the Ugandan precedent, will now establish missions elsewhere on their own initiative, instead of waiting for the Africans to come to them. The “missionary” situation of the diaspora has made Orthodox better aware of the meaning of their own tradition: may not a closer involvement in the task of evangelizing non-Christian countries have the same effect?

Every Christian body is today confronted by grave problems, but the Orthodox have perhaps greater difficulties to face than most. In contemporary Orthodoxy it is not always easy “to recognize victory beneath the outward appearance of failure, to discern the power of God fulfilling itself in weakness, the true Church within the historic reality” (V. Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, p. 246). But if there are obvious weaknesses, there are also many signs of life. Whatever the doubts and ambiguities of Church-State relations in communist countries, today as in the past Orthodoxy has its martyrs and confessors. The decline of Orthodox monasticism, unmistakable in many areas, is not by any means universal; and there are centers which may prove the source of a future monastic resurrection. The spiritual treasures of Orthodoxy — for example, the Philokalia and the Jesus Prayer — so far from being forgotten, are used and appreciated more and more. Orthodox theologians are few in number, but some of them — often under the stimulus of western learning — are rediscovering vital elements in their theological inheritance. A shortsighted nationalism is hindering the Church in its work, but there are growing attempts at cooperation. Missions are still on a very small scale, but Orthodoxy is showing a greater awareness of their importance. No Orthodox who is realistic and honest with himself can feel complacent about the present state of his Church; yet despite its many problems and manifest human shortcomings, Orthodoxy can at the same time look to the future with confidence and hope.

*Go to the top*

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