

Eastern Orthodoxy

By Prof. John Brenner

Eastern Orthodoxy is a potent force on the world religious scene. In many parts of Eastern Europe Eastern Orthodoxy is an essential part of national culture. In the West Orthodoxy holds an appeal for Christians who have seen Western Christianity devastated by centuries of Enlightenment thought and rationalistic approaches to Scripture and doctrine. Orthodoxy's claim of historic continuity with the Apostolic Age, its conservative attitude toward doctrine, its liturgical worship, mystical tendencies, and experiential emphases have aroused interest in Orthodoxy among many Americans. Even some in the scholarly community are taking note. Many biblical scholars, though unwilling to abandon critical approaches to Scripture recognize that the historical critical method is not neutral and has, in fact, been destructive to Christianity. Orthodoxy's emphasis on the early church fathers and interpretive tradition seems to allow scholars to use critical approaches to Scripture within certain parameters or boundaries which preserve the basic teachings of historic Christianity.

It is important, therefore, not only for you who serve as Lutheran missionaries in Slavic countries to be familiar with Eastern Orthodoxy, it is also important for Lutherans working in America. The topic you have chosen for this paper is timely and worthy of consideration.

A Brief Introduction to Eastern Orthodoxy: Historical Overview and Theological Emphases

1. Historical Overview

The early centers of Christianity were in the Eastern Mediterranean. Early Christian mission work was done primarily in the Greek language. The conquests of Alexander the Great had made the Greek language the *lingua franca* of the biblical world. The Roman conquests had brought administrative structure, law and order, and peace to the Mediterranean world. Roman roads allowed ease of travel. Roman power made the highways and sea travel safe from bandits and pirates.

Although Rome granted religious toleration in the empire, Jews and Christians were often seen as troublemakers because of their strict monotheism and their refusal to pay divine homage to the emperor. Bizarre rumors floated around about Christian worship and practice. Most persecutions were localized until the time of Emperor Decius (249-251) who made a deliberate attempt to root out Christianity. Galienus(253-268) proclaimed an edict of toleration in 260, but persecutions resumed under Diocletian (284-305). The final extensive persecution lasted from 303 to 311. Because of the size of the empire and slowness of communication Diocletian had divided the empire into East and West and established a kind of tetrarchy. He became "Augustus" in the East and appointed his old comrade in arms, Maximinian, as "Augustus" in the West. Each of them had a "Caesar" as second in command under them.

When Diocletian retired and Maximinian was forced to abdicate there was a power struggle. During this time an Edict of Religious Toleration to Christians was issued (April 311) ending the last severe persecution. Constantine, the eventual victor in the power struggle, was one of the signers of the edict. As he moved to consolidate his power he led his army to the Tiber River to advance on Rome. The night before the battle he had a dream in which he saw the first two Greek letters of the name Christ with the words "By this sign you will conquer." He had the *chi rho* symbol placed on his helmet and on the shield of each of his soldiers. Victorious in the Battle of the Mulvian Bridge, he and Licinius, who was the other remaining contender for Roman Emperor, issued the Edict of Milan (313). This edict gave Christianity full legal equality with any other religion in the empire and provided that property confiscated from Christians was to be returned. Licinius was defeated in battle by Constantine in 314 and again in 323. Thus Constantine became sole emperor of the Roman Empire.

Constantine proceeded to exempt the clergy from the obligation of filling municipal offices and to allow money to be taken from the imperial treasury to build churches and support clergy. Christians were overjoyed by Constantine's decrees and saw his accession to the throne as an act of God's gracious providence. However, with Constantine's accession the church became subordinate to the state. Constantine interfered with ecclesiastical affairs, forcing bishops and congregations to bend to his will. He moved the capital of his empire to Byzantium to escape the influence of paganism and the nuisance of the Roman aristocracy and renamed the city Constantinople. Under Constantine and his successors the empire became the civil expression of the church. The empire was center of the world. For there was only one Christian empire. The emperor was the image of the Creator. He became an ecclesiastical figure and had the spiritual responsibility of maintaining the faith.

Monasticism

The age of martyrs passed with the arrival of Constantine and the establishment of Christianity as the state religion. Monks became the new "martyrs" in the empire by dying to the world. Monasticism also arose as a reaction to the Christianizing of society or secularization of Christianity and the "worldliness" of the institutionalized church. The monastic impulse developed in a variety of ways. Some people became ascetics who did not separate from the world, but continued to live in society. Others became hermits (anchoritic monasticism). They fled the world to live by themselves in the wilderness and become closer to God. These desert fathers became quite influential in the East. Other hermits lived in solitary cells in close proximity to one another (semieremitic monasticism), Monastic communities also developed with several monks or nuns living under the same roof (cenobitic monasticism). Egypt became an early center of monasticism.

Several early monastic leaders are worthy of note. Anthony (ca. 251-356) lived in seclusion for 20 years during which time he is reported to have fought many spiritual battles. He became a spiritual leader and a model for those who wished to imitate him. Athanasius made him famous by penning the biography, the *Life of Anthony*. Amman (d. ca. 350) founded a semieremitic community in the desert in the southwestern portion of the Nile delta. Pachomius (292-346) is known as the "founder" of cenobitic monasticism. At his death there were approximately 3,000 monks under his jurisdiction in nine separate monasteries and two affiliated nunneries along the Nile in Upper Egypt. Shenoute (334-450) introduced harsher rules into cenobitic monasticism and was a participant in the Council of Ephesus in 431.

Monasticism also spread into other parts of the Eastern Mediterranean. In Syria Simeon Styletes (388-459) at first lived in a monastic community, next as a hermit in a cell. Finally he settled on top of ever higher pillars. In his last years he lived on a pillar more than fifty feet high. Crowds thronged to hear him preach, seek his advice, and ask for his intercession. Several imitators came after him.

Basil the Great (330-379) lived as a monk in Syria and Egypt before settling near Neocaesarea. He promoted cenobitic monasticism as superior to anchoritic. He emphasized service to God through obedience to superiors, through liturgical and private prayer, charity to the poor and manual labor. Basil's monastic ideas have served to define Greek and Slavonic monasticism ever since.

Monasticism in the East is a lay movement. Those who become priests through ordination are called "hiermonks." Many monks have seen themselves as continuing the line of Old Testament prophets, particularly Elijah, Elisha, and John the Baptist. An elder is a monk of spiritual discernment and wisdom whom others adopt as their guide and spiritual director. "The elder sees in a concrete and practical way what the will of God is in relation to each person who comes to consult with him: This is the elder's special gift or *charisma*."¹ The Eastern Orthodox believe that through spiritual exercises and prayer a monk may ascend spiritually and have a mystical experience of God. The Hesychasts of Mt. Athos in Greece attached special importance to the repetition of the Jesus Prayer—"Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me"—to have a vision of the Divine Light they

¹ Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church*. (New York: Penguin Books, 1993) p. 39.

believe to be identical to the Light that shown around the disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration. Unlike the West the monastic communities in the East are not tied to special orders (Augustinian, Dominican, Benedictine, etc.).

Monasticism has been extremely important in Eastern Orthodoxy. Monks serve as a balance to the institutionalized church. They are revered by the laity who in the past thronged to hear hermits preach and give spiritual advice. They serve by praying for the church and by becoming missionaries for the spread of the gospel and expansion of the church. Most bishops come from the monasteries. The Great Lavra, one of the twenty ruling monasteries on Mt. Athos, has produced twenty-six Patriarchs and 144 bishops.²

The Ecumenical Councils

The Eastern Church very much considers itself the church of the seven “Ecumenical” Councils. These councils were all convened in the East and the controversies those councils settled help shape the future Eastern Orthodox Church.

Already in the second century the doctrines of the Trinity and the deity of Christ were under attack. Some church fathers spoke ably in defense of these precious truths, Irenaeus (ca. 115-ca. 202) in his writing against the Gnostics taught that the Son and the Spirit participate in the divine substance. Tertullian (ca. 200) defined God as Father, Son and Spirit and employed the term *trinitas*. He wrote, “Everywhere I hold one substance in three cohering.” Origen (ca. 185-ca. 251) spoke of the eternal generation of the Son, i.e., the Logos was a person from all eternity.

Among the early heresies confronting the church was Docetism. Docetism, taught that Christ’s humanity was only an appearance. He only *seemed* to have a real body. Many of the Gnostic sects often held a docetic view of Christ. Ignatius of Antioch (ca. 114) argued against this heresy. Another of the early errors was the Dynamic or Dynamistic Monarchianism of Paul of Samosata (ca. 260). He taught that the Logos or the Son, and Wisdom or the Spirit are merely attributes of the one God. Jesus, born of a virgin, was a man upon whom God exercised his Logos-influence. Jesus eventually attained a permanent oneness with God (adoptionism). Paul used the term *homoousios* to designate God and the Logos as one person.

Sabellius (ca. 215) taught Modalistic Monarchianism. He believed that the one God reveals himself at different times in three different modes or forms (*onomata, prosopa*). In the Father God reveals himself as Creator, in the Son as Redeemer, and in the Spirit as Sanctifier, like an actor playing three different roles or parts in a play. He tried to maintain monotheism without sacrificing the divinity of Christ and fell into the error of Patripassianism-the Father became incarnate and suffered for our sins.

The heresy that posed the greatest danger to the church of the third and fourth centuries (and for some time thereafter) was Arianism. Arius (ca. 260-336) as a presbyter at Alexandria. He tried to preserve monotheism and the independence of the Logos (Christ) and developed an idea of radical subordinationism. He taught that the Son is the firstborn of creation through whom everything else was created. He claimed concerning the Son that there was when he was not. “Before he was begotten, or created or purposed, or established, he was not” (according to Theodoret, *Tripartite History*). He taught that Jesus is not equal to God or one in essence with him. Arius popularized his teachings in hymns and his heresy almost won the empire.

Athanasius (300-373), bishop of Alexandria and a fierce and unmovable opponent of Arius, led the opposition to Arianism. He argued that Arianism leads to practical polytheism. If Christ is not co-eternal and of one essence (*homoousios*) with the Father, and at the same time not just a man, he is a demigod comparable to the Demiurge of the Gnostics. Those who worship him would be worshipping a creature. If the Father has always been the Father (a necessity since there can be no change in the Godhead), then the Son must have been generated from all eternity. Otto Heick is undoubtedly correct when he writes concerning Athanasius, “At Nicea

² Ibid., p. 39.

his eloquence was so convincing that the small minority of the Homoousians prevailed over the large and influential majority of Arians and Semi-Arians.”³ Of significance for the East was the fact Athanasius’ Christology was directly connected to his soteriology which he expressed in terms of *theosis*. It was Athanasius who declared, “God became man that man might become God.”

1st Ecumenical Council

The Council of Nicea (325) was called by Emperor Constantine to settle the Arian Controversy. The vast majority of council participants were from the East. There was one bishop from Gaul and two presbyters from Rome. There were three groups representing three different views at the council: (1) A minority who agreed with Arius. (2) The majority who really did not understand the issue (often called Semi-Arians), led by Eusebius of Caesarea. (3) A minority led by Athanasius. The Council issued a creed that clearly confessed the divinity of the Son. The creed was subscribed by the bishops. Those who taught otherwise were condemned and civil penalties were attached.

The decisions of the Council of Nicea, however, did not end the controversy. Theologians were struggling to find terms that would express scriptural truth, eliminate error, and communicate clearly. Among the problems in finding such terms were the fact that Sabellius had used the term *homoousios* to express his false teaching and the fact that the terms *hypostasis* and *ousia* were used interchangeably.

Arius and three bishops (including Eusebius of Nicomedia) were excommunicated and banished. However, in 335 Athanasius was exiled and in 336 Arius reinstated. Constantine died in 337, leaving the empire to two pro-Nicene sons and one anti-Nicene son. The East remained divided into three factions: Arians, Semi-Arians (*homoiousios*), and a few Nicenes. In 341 a compromise was reached at Antioch which rejected Arianism, but avoided homoousios. At the Synod at Sardica (343), Athanasius was exiled second time. The Anti-Nicene Constantius became sole emperor in 351. Athanasius was exiled again in 356 giving rise to the expression “Athanasius against the world and the world against Athanasius.”

The Three Cappadocians, Basil the Great (330-379), Gregory Nazianzus “The Theologian” (ca. 329-390), and Gregory of Nyssa, brother of Basil (331/40-ca.395), met with Athanasius and explained why the East found *homoousios* unacceptable. They suggested the terms *hypostasis* instead of *prosopon* to express identity of persons and *ousia* to express the single essence of God.

In the meantime a new heresy called Apollinarianism (Apollinarius, 310-ca. 390) had arisen. Apollinarianism taught that the Logos replaced the human spirit or mind in Christ. This teaching meant that Jesus was less than fully human.

2nd Ecumenical Council

In order to address the new heresy and to settle the confusion that followed Nicea, the Council of Constantinople was called by Emperors Theodosius and Gratian in 381. There were no Western bishops invited and none in attendance. The council issued the *Symbolum Constantinopolitanum* which we know today as the Nicene Creed. *Hypostasis* was now understood in the sense of Person, not Essence; and emphasis was placed on the equality of the Holy Spirit with the Father & the Son. However, there was no *filioque*. The creed also asserted the true humanity of Christ against Apollinarianism

After the Trinitarian controversies settled down new problems arose. How are we to understand the relationship between the divine and human natures in Christ? Two schools with a contrasting approach to Scripture were involved in the controversies that followed.

³ Otto Heick, *A History of Christian Thought*. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1965) vol. 1, p. 157.

The Antiochian School held to the historico-grammatical approach to Scripture. These theologians tried to maintain the integrity and completeness of the human nature of Christ in opposition to Apollinarianism and Docetism. They believed that the unity in the person of Christ is a not union according to essence or energy, but a moral unity or unity of the will. They expressed the unity of the two natures with the term *synapheia* (conjunction or connection). They rejected the communication of attributes. They were willing to call Mary *christotokos* (Christ bearer), but not *theotokos* (God bearer). They taught that “by the use of his human will Christ overcame the tempter, sin, and all fleshly lusts, and arrived at perfection. The process of divinization which took place in the humanity of Christ had a saving effect on the human race which is connected with him.”⁴

Theodore of Mopsuestia (ca. 350-428) and Nestorius (ca. 381-451) were the leading proponents of this false Christology. Theodore taught that the Word of God indwelt the assumed man by God’s grace. The two natures are one *prosopon*. Nestorius, bishop of Constantinople, was a harsh persecutor of those he considered heretics. He objected to the rising cult of Mary and voiced strong disapproval of calling her *theotokos*. He wanted to preserve the immutability of the divine nature and integrity of the human nature and believed that the final definition of the Council of Chalcedon (451) that Christ is one person in two natures vindicated his teaching.

The Alexandrian School followed an allegorical approach to Scripture. The Alexandrians tended to subordinate the human nature to the divine in Christ, Gregory Nazianzus said that the mixture or commingling of the natures with the human disappearing into the divine was like starlight disappearing before the brilliance of the sun. Gregory of Nyssa taught that the human nature is enveloped and absorbed into the divine like a drop of vinegar in the ocean.

Cyril of Alexandria (ca. 375-444) was a fierce opponent of Nestorius and used questionable tactics in carrying out his opposition. He emphasized the personal union of the two natures in Christ—Christ was one from two natures. He said that only before the union and in abstract can we speak of two natures. After the incarnation and in concrete we can speak of only one divine-human nature. He taught that there is a communication of attributes, yet each nature preserves its attributes.

3rd Ecumenical Council

The co-emperors Valentinian III and Theodosius II called the Council of Ephesus in 431 to deal with these issues. Cyril and his party arrived first and convened the council without Nestorius’ supporters being present. Nestorius had refused to attend until his supporters arrived. Cyril had Nestorius’ teaching condemned and had him deposed from office. Nestorius complained to the emperor who declared the decrees invalid. John of Antioch arrived and convened his own council which then proceeded to condemn Cyril.

When the papal legates arrived the council was reconvened. The emperor deposed both Cyril and Nestorius. However, Cyril was set free after the council closed in October 431. The council affirmed *Theotokos*, and condemned Nestorius.

Once again a council did not completely eliminate the problem. John of Antioch and Cyril both signed a compromise document in 433. Meanwhile Eutyches (ca. 378-454) of Constantinople, a fierce opponent of Nestorianism denied that the manhood of Christ was consubstantial with ours. He taught that there were two natures before the incarnation, but only one after. Eutyches brought Cyril’s Christology to its logical conclusion.

Cyril died in 444 and was succeeded by his arch-deacon, Dioscorus, an ambitious man who wanted to make the Alexandrian See supreme in the East. Theodoret attacked Eutyches’ doctrine and at a local synod Patriarch Flavian of Constantinople deposed him. Dioscorus of Alexandria persuaded Emperor Theodosius II to convene another general council to settle matters. This synod met in Ephesus in 449 with Dioscorus presiding. He was protected by monks and armed soldiers. Theodoret was excluded from the council. Eutyches was exonerated.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 175.

Patriarch Flavian was beaten by monks and died from his wounds a few days later in banishment. The papal party did not dare to read Pope Leo's epistle and withdrew quietly. Leo labeled it a "Council of Robbers."

4th Ecumenical Council

Emperor Marcion called a council to meet at Nicea to restore peace. The bishops assembled at Nicea in September 451, but the council was moved to Chalcedon near Constantinople because of the "turbulent conduct" of the opposing parties and so that the emperor could attend. The proceedings were "tumultuous" and the laymen present had to remind the bishops of their clerical dignity. The papal delegates presided. The decisions of the Robber Synod were overturned. Nestorianism and Eutychianism were both condemned. The council upheld Cyril's Council of Ephesus and adopted the "Definition of Chalcedon." The Council also made the bishop of Constantinople a patriarch second only to Rome. The West accepted all the dogmatic decisions of this council, but objected to the title of patriarch being given to the bishop of Constantinople "to protect the interests of the other Easter Sees," Antioch, Alexandria, Jerusalem.

The decisions of Chalcedon seemed to many to be a departure from orthodoxy. The fact that Chalcedon received into communion Theodoret of Cyrhus (the chief enemy of Eutyches and former friend of Nestorius) and condemned Dioscorus seemed like a victory for the Antiochenes. A monastic reaction to the "imperial religion" set in. The Syrian monks joined the Egyptians in claiming that Chalcedon was a rehabilitation of Nestorianism. This monastic movement carried with it great numbers of the common people. At times the opposition grew violent. "In Alexandria the soldiers who were guarding Patriarch Proterius, appointed by Constantinople to replace the deposed Dioscorus, were locked in the Caesareum by an inflamed mob and burned alive,"⁵

Monophysite churches were formed in Egypt, Syria, and Armenia. Monophysite patriarchs were elected in Alexandria (457) and Antioch (475). Those monks in Palestine and Syria under the leadership of St. Sabas, however, remained true to orthodoxy. Those who remained orthodox were called Melkites.

Trouble arose when Emperor Zeno was driven from office for a time by the usurper Basiliscus who published his *Encyclion*. This document condemned Chalcedon and Basiliscus forced bishops to sign it. Zeno came back to power in 476. He supported Chalcedonian orthodoxy, but influenced by the Patriarch Acacius and recognizing the growth of Monophysitism published his *Henoticon* which rejected Pope Leo's *Tome* and the creedal definition of Chalcedon. Although signed by the Monophysite patriarchs in Alexandria and Antioch, it did not have popular support.

The Chalcedonian patriarch in Alexandria appealed to Pope Felix III for help in his struggle with the Monophysites. The pope demanded that Patriarch Acacius accept the teachings of Chalcedon and Leo's *Tome*. When he refused, the pope excommunicated him. This began the "Schism of Acacius" which lasted for more than 30 years (484-518). Emperor Anastasius openly supported the Monophysites.

Emperor Justinian came to power and ruled for forty years (527-65). He was determined to have religious unity in his empire. He actively persecuted pagans and in 529 closed the pagan university in Athens, where the philosopher Proclus (ca. 410-485) had taught. The pope supported Justinian in the West, but the East was dominated by the Monophysites. The Antiochene church was headed by the Monophysite Severus (ca. 465-538). Justinian tried to impose orthodoxy by force. He saw to it that orthodox bishops were placed in office by the police. The common people rioted. Whole monastic communities were forced to scatter.

Justinian's wife Theodora, however, supported the Monophysites. For a time Justinian was influenced by his wife and drawn to Monophysitism. When the Roman Pope Agapetas came to Constantinople and exposed the Monophysite heresy in the new Patriarch, Justinian changed course again and in 536 condemned Monophysitism,

⁵ Alexander Schmemmann, *The Historical Road of Eastern Orthodoxy* (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1977) p. 140.

ordered the books of Severus to be burned, and sent an orthodox bishop to Alexandria with unlimited power. That bishop began a wave of terror.

In an attempt to appease some Monophysites Justinian was persuaded to issue a decree condemning three deceased Antiochene theologians: Theodore of Mopsuestia, Theodoret of Cyrrhus and Ibas of Edessa. This decree became known as the *Three Chapters*. The decree was seen as an insult in the West. Pope Vigilius at first refused to condemn dead men as contrary to the practice of the church, although he condemned many of their propositions. His name was removed from the diptychs (the list of names of living and departed Christians for whom special prayer is made in the Greek and Latin eucharistic rites). He was violently arrested and exiled. He eventually agreed to the condemnations.

5th Ecumenical Council

The Fifth Ecumenical Council, Constantinople II (553), condemned the Three Chapters and the authors of the decree were anathematized. The name of Origen now appeared on the list of heretics. The decisions of this council were slowly accepted in the West.

Some continued to try to reconcile Monophysitism and Orthodoxy. Emperor Heraclius and Monophysite leaders attempted a compromise between the two sides by declaring that there were two natures in Christ, but only one mode of activity, a divine/human energy (monoenergism). Christ accomplished his work through the exercise of one divine/human will (monothelitism). This terminology was supported by Patriarch Sergius of Constantinople and Cyrus of Alexandria. Pope Honorius issued an unguarded approval. A Palestinian monk named Sophrinus (later Patriarch of Jerusalem) urged rejection of the expression and continued to voice strong opposition. After Sophrinus' death Emperor Heraclius issued his *Exposition of Faith (Ecthesis)* which was monothelite. Monothelitism was accepted in Constantinople, but opposed in the West.

Under Constans, the grandson of Heraclius, the controversy came to a head. The Emperor favored Monothelitism, but was opposed by the abbot of a monastery in Constantinople, Maximus the Confessor. The Emperor issued an edict, the *Typos*, which forbade any more discussion of one or two wills. Pope Martin summoned a Western council which condemned Monothelitism. He was arrested, tortured, taken to Constantinople, tried, mocked, beaten and exiled to Crimea where he died. Maximus the Confessor, a staunch opponent of monothelitism was tried and exiled to Thrace. After a time he was summoned back to Constantinople, browbeaten, and tortured. He was sent into exile having had his tongue and his right hand cut off.

6th Ecumenical Council

When the new emperor Constantine Pogonatus came into power, he called the Sixth Ecumenical Council, Constantinople III (680) to resolve the issue. The council rejected Monothelitism and supplemented the definition of Chalcedon.

The Challenge of Islam

By the seventh century the Byzantine Empire was torn by doctrinal strife and religious factionalism. Persecution of errorists was all too common. There was moral corruption and self-indulgence among the laity who were not overly zealous in living the Christian life. The government was feeble and accustomed to luxury. The Empire was involved in almost constant fighting with the Persian Empire.

More problems were on the horizon. About 570 A.D. a man by the name of Muhammad was born in Mecca and raised by relatives after the death of his parents. At the age of 40 he had a vision which led him to believe that he was a prophet. His wife was his first convert. He spent time in a cave searching for answers to his spiritual questions. He became angered by the polytheism and immorality around him and began preaching a

strict monotheism. He was greeted with open hostility wherever he went until he was accepted in 622 in the little town of Yathrib (later called Medina - the prophet's city). Muhammad's move to Medina is known as the "Hegira" (a breaking off from one's own tribe). Arming his followers he conquered one small town after another. In 630 he captured Mecca and purged the city of the more than 350 deities which were worshiped there. By his death in 632 most of Arabia had become Moslem.

After a power struggle for the leadership of the movement, the Arabians were ready for conquest. Damascus fell in 635. Christians were allowed to live in security so long as they paid their taxes. Jerusalem fell in 637. Patriarch Sophrinus offered to surrender the city if the Caliph would take delivery in person. When the Caliph arrived the city was handed over to him peacefully. He treated the Christians, their shrines and churches well. Alexandria fell in 642. Most of Persia was conquered by 644. By 732 the Arabs stood at the mountain passes which guard the way to India. Moslem forces landed at Gibraltar in 711 and conquered most of the Iberian Peninsula within seven years. The Moslem advance was finally stopped by Frankish forces under Charles Martel in 732 near Poitiers in France.

Initially the conditions for those conquered by the Arabs were not intolerable. Many were as well off under Arab rule as they had been under Byzantine rule. Non-Moslems were required to pay taxes. Those who submitted peacefully to conquest retained their property. Those who resisted had their property seized as booty (often the conquerors allowed even those who resisted to keep their property). However, there were religious pressures. Although not forced to become Moslem, Christians were often forbidden to carry on any religious activity outside their churches. They were also prohibited from building new churches or ringing bells. In addition there were social and financial benefits for converting to Islam. As the centuries progressed the church also suffered persecution, particularly under later Islamic empires.

The Islamic conquests had a number of results. Nestorians and Monophysites found some rest and protection under Islamic rule. From the seventh century onward the chief factor of church politics in the East became its relation to Islam and Islamic overlords. Islam also offered special spiritual and intellectual challenges to Christianity. Eastern Orthodoxy under Islamic rule often had to take a rather defensive and isolationist position.

The Iconoclastic Controversy and the Seventh Ecumenical Council

The veneration of icons is an historical development. Early Christian art as seen in the catacombs usually was not a realistic portrayal of Christ or events in his life. Early Christian art employed religious symbols. It expressed certain ideas about Christ and the church (e.g., Baptism and the Lord's Supper). By the seventh century iconography was an art form and the veneration of icons was common. Eastern Orthodoxy distinguishes between veneration of icons and the worship that belongs to God alone. Nevertheless among the common people the veneration of icons often degenerated into idolatry. Orthodox theologian and scholar Alexander Schmemmann writes:

We hear of the custom of taking icons as godparents for one's children, of adding paint scraped from icons to the Eucharistic wine, of laying the Sacrament upon an icon so as to receive it from a saint's hand, and so on. Obviously, many practices involved fundamental distortion; the honor paid to the icons was often close to idol worship, and the honoring of their material substance was permitted. In other words, the same thing occurred with the veneration of icons that had often happened earlier with the cult of the saints and the veneration of relics. Arising from sound Christological foundations as a product and revelation of the Church's faith in Christ, too often

they lost touch with this foundation and, changing into something self contained, lapsed back into paganism.⁶

The case for Islam was strengthened by what appeared to be idolatry in the Christian Church. Since Islam prohibited the making of images, the use of icons in Christian homes and worship made it difficult for Christians to be taken seriously by Moslems. For these reasons some in the Eastern Church began to oppose the use of icons.

Iconoclasm appeared first among bishops on the eastern borders of the Byzantine Empire and was soon taken up by the emperor. Emperor Leo III, the Isaurian, (ca. 675-741) was an extremely able military man and ruler. He defeated the Saracens at the gates of Constantinople in 718 and saved Europe from Islam. In 730 he published a decree against icons. He removed the patriarch from office for not submitting to him and replaced him with Anastasius. When officials taking down a representation of Christ over the great brass gates at Constantinople smashed an ax into the face of the icon, a crowd of women seized the ladder and murdered the officials. The iconoclastic controversy had begun in earnest.

The Western Church unanimously condemned iconoclasm. In the East the monks were the chief opponents of Emperor Leo's reforms. John of Damascus (ca. 649-ca. 749) opposed iconoclasm from outside the borders of the empire. Nevertheless the government continued to support it. Leo was followed on the throne by his son, Constantine "Copronymous" who continued his father's policies rather systematically. He purged the episcopate and in 753 called a council to condemn icons and icon worship. Persecutions followed. The years 762-75 have been called the decade of blood.

Under Constantine's son, Leo IV Khazar, the persecutions died down. When Leo died, his wife Irene (780-802) assumed authority in place of his juvenile son, Constantine VI. She had the orthodox Tartasius installed as patriarch. Soon the Seventh Ecumenical Council, Nicea II (787), was convened to deal with iconoclasm.

The council first tried to meet in Constantinople, but soldiers loyal to the memory of Copronymous prevented the gathering. The council finally met in Nicea with papal representatives and two monks representing the patriarchs of Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem who could not come because they were outside the empire in lands under Islamic control. The council condemned the iconoclastic council of 753 and upheld the use of icons, declaring that the reverence given to icons was different from the "true devotion according to faith which befits the divine nature alone." The "honor rendered to the image ascends to its prototype and he who reveres an icon is worshipping the *hypostasis* of the one portrayed."

After the council many in the government and military continued to support iconoclasm. They remembered the "glorious" reign of Constantine Copronymous and blamed the misfortunes and failures of the empire at the beginning of the 9th century on icon worship. In 815 Emperor Leo V "the Armenian" demanded that icons in the churches be raised above human height so that they could not be kissed. Most of the church rose in opposition. When Leo deposed Patriarch Nicephorus, Theodore Studite (759-826) became the leader of the orthodox reaction. On Palm Sunday 815, thousands of Studite monks in a procession moved throughout the city carrying icons. Imperial persecution followed with bishops exiled, monks tortured and killed. The persecutions lessened somewhat under Leo's two successors.

Empress Theodora, wife of Theophilus, stopped the persecutions immediately after her husband's death. In March 843, Methodius, one of the first victims of the 9th century persecution, became patriarch. On the first Sunday in Lent 843 the icons were reinstated in the cathedral of St. Sophia in Constantinople. To this day on the first Sunday in Lent the Orthodox celebrate this event as the "Triumph of Orthodoxy."

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 204.

The Great Schism (1054)

The Great Schism did not happen overnight. There were a number of differences between the East and West historically and these differences seemed to become more pronounced as the years went by.

Intellectual approach -- The West was practical; the East was speculative.

Political environment -- In the West the empire fell apart because of the barbarian invasions and the bishop of Rome filled the political void. In the East the emperor remained strongly in control of both church and state until the fall of Constantinople.

Church polity -- In the West the bishop of Rome assumed a strong central leadership role with the state in the background; in the East there was an emphasis on the collegiality of the patriarchs and bishops with the church dominated by the state.

Language -- By the mid 5th century few in the West understood Greek; by the end of the 6th century few in the East understood Latin.

Ethnic make-up -- In the West the German tribes added vigor to the declining Latin civilization; in the East the Greek populace was mixed with Orientals and Slavs.

Geographical separation -- After the German invasions in the West and the Slavic, Avar, and Islamic invasions in the East, travel and intellectual and commercial intercourse became increasingly difficult.

Differences in religious practices -- In the West the date for Easter followed a slightly different cycle from the East. The West insisted on celibate priests; the East allowed priests to be married. The West used unleavened bread in the Lord's Supper, the East used leavened bread.

Differences in religious approach and emphases -- The West began with the unity of the Godhead in the Trinity; the East began with the "threeness" of the persons. Theology in the West used concepts adapted from Roman law; the East understood theology in the context of worship and the liturgy. The West tended to think primarily of Christ the Victim; the East of Christ the Victor. The West spoke more of redemption, the East of deification.

A number of events also led to the break between East and West. In 754 Pope Stephen was "out of communion" with the Byzantine emperor and patriarch because of their iconoclasm. He turned north to the Frankish King Pepin, beginning an orientation away from the East and toward the North and the Germans. On Christmas Day 800 the pope crown Charlemagne Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire. Charlemagne sought recognition from the Byzantine ruler, but was refused.

The Photian Schism heightened tensions. Patriarch Ignatius was deposed by the Emperor who made Photius (c. 810-c.895) patriarch. Ignatius' supporters considered Photius a usurper. Pope Nicholas I (858-67) refused to recognize Photius without an investigation of the dispute between Photius and Ignatius. Photius agreed and asked the papal legates to preside at the council. The council decided in favor of Photius, but Nicholas reversed the decision of his legates. In the meantime both the East and the West sent missionaries to the Bulgars. Conflicts developed between the missionaries. The German missionaries from the West insisted on the *filioque* in the Nicene Creed, The term had come to be used in the West to strengthen the Nicene Creed against the Arian Goths who were ruling Spain and part of Italy. The addition was approved by the Council of Toledo in Spain in 589 or 653 to mark the conversion of the Visigoths from Arianism to Orthodox Christianity. The addition was not

accepted in Rome until the early eleventh century.⁷ Photius was concerned about the western missionaries and alarmed at *filioque*. He denounced the term as heretical in an Encyclical to the other patriarchs in the East in 867. That same year the emperor deposed Photius and reinstated Ignatius.

In 869-70 an anti-Photian council was held which reversed the previous decision in favor of Photius. The emperor had the German missionaries expelled from Bulgaria in 870. Photius and Ignatius reconciled. When Ignatius died Photius became patriarch once again. In 879 another council was held in Constantinople which anathematized the previous council and withdrew all condemnations of Photius. These decisions were accepted at Rome.

In the eleventh century the Normans extended their military power to Italy. The Normans forced the Greeks in Byzantine Italy to conform to Western usages. Patriarch Michael Cerularius (d. 1058) made the same demand of the Latin Churches in Constantinople. They refused and he closed the Latin Churches in 1052.

In 1053 Michael Cerularius made a conciliatory offer to restore the pope's name to the diptychs, The pope sent three legates to Constantinople to settle the questions over the Latin and Greek usages. Bishop Humbert handed a rather harsh letter (signed by the pope but drafted by Humbert) to the patriarch without giving the usual greetings. Cerularius refused to have any more dealings with him. Humbert became angry and drafted a bull of excommunication against Cerularius and placed it on the altar of the Hagia Sophia during a service. Among other things Humbert charged Cerularius with omitting the *filioque* from the creed. The patriarch and his synod anathematized Humbert. For a time friendly relations continued between the East and the West. But the schism was made complete by the coming of the crusaders.

The Crusades

The Schism of 1054 was not immediately evident throughout the Christian world. From an Eastern point of view the crusades marked the real division between East and West.

The Western Europeans embarked on the crusades to recover the sacred sites in Palestine from the infidels and to protect Western Christians who were making pilgrimages to the Holy Land. There were reports in Europe of these pilgrims being mistreated. In 1081 the Byzantine emperor sent requests to the West for help against the Turk.

The First Crusade (1095-99) was led by Peter the Hermit and Walter the Penniless. The crusaders fought their way through Hungary and Bulgaria before reaching Constantinople. The citizens of Constantinople viewed them with disgust and quickly shipped them across the Bosphorus. The Crusaders captured Antioch in 1098 and Jerusalem in 1099, setting up Latin Patriarchs in both cities. The Orthodox and the Catholics worshiped harmoniously in Jerusalem where the patriarchate was vacant, but in Antioch the patriarch fled to Constantinople and the Greeks refused to be subject to the Latin patriarch.

The Second Crusade (1147-49) was promoted by Bernard of Clairvaux and occasioned by the capture of Edessa by the Saracens. Louis VII of France and Conrad III of Germany led their armies to the Eastern Mediterranean, but they failed to take Damascus and returned home. Some believe that Emperor Manuel of Constantinople entered into secret communications with the Sultan and misled the Crusaders.

The Third Crusade (1189-92) was undertaken because of the fall of Jerusalem to Saladin. The crusaders were led by Philip II of France, Richard I of England, and Holy Roman Emperor Frederick Barbarossa. Barbarossa defeated the sultan and his army, but drowned while crossing a river. Richard reached an agreement which left Jerusalem in Moslem hands, but allowed Christians the possession of the holy sepulchre and the right of pilgrimage there.

The Fourth Crusade (1202-1204) proved disastrous for the Eastern Church and Empire. The crusaders were originally bound for Egypt, but were asked by Alexius, the son of the deposed Byzantine Emperor Isaac (who

⁷Kenneth S. Latourette, *A History of Christianity* (New York: Harper and Row, 1975) vol. 1, p. 303-304.

had been blinded by his brother who usurped the throne), to come to Constantinople to restore them to power. The Greeks fled before the approaching army of crusaders and the city of Constantinople was taken following an easy siege. When Alexius and Isaac did not fulfill the conditions the crusaders had set for their help, the crusaders sacked the city again. They carted off priceless treasures and documents. They set up a Latin Kingdom in Constantinople which lasted until 1261. Many Eastern Orthodox have never quite forgiven Western Europe for the plunder of their holy city.

Because of the Crusades Europe was protected for several hundred years from invasion by the Turks. However, the split between East and West hardened and Constantinople and the Byzantine Empire were greatly weakened.

Attempts at Reconciliation

The Council of Lyons (1274) was called by Emperor Michael VIII [Paleologus] (1259-82), the man who recovered Constantinople from the West. Michael needed the support and help of the papacy against threatened attacks from Charles Anjou, ruler of Sicily. The Orthodox representatives recognized the papal claims of authority and agreed to add the *filioque*. The decisions of this council were overwhelmingly rejected by the majority of the East and repudiated by Michael's successor. Michael was deprived of Christian burial because of his actions.

The Hesychast Controversy gave evidence that East and West were growing further apart. The Hesychasts (*hesychia* = inner stillness, prayer of silence, stripped of all “unnecessary” words, images, etc. The prayer of the heart = the Jesus prayer) employed a special method, special posture and breathing while reciting the Jesus prayer. The culmination of mystical experience for the Hesychasts was the vision of the Uncreated Light. The Hesychasts were attacked by a Greek from Italy, Barlaam the Calabrian. Arguing from apophasis (see apophatic theology below) he claimed that God can be known only indirectly, not by an immediate experience. Gregory Palamas (1296-1359) defended the Hesychasts by distinguishing between the essence and energies of God. We cannot know God according to his essence, but we can know God through his energies, i.e., his grace which he bestows in a direct manifestation of himself, a personal encounter between the Creator and the creature.⁸

Nicholas Cabasilas (b. ca. 1332) was sympathetic to the Hesychasts and argued for a mysticism that is “always Christocentric, sacramental, and ecclesial.” The Hesychast practice was upheld by two local councils in Constantinople (1341-1351).

The Council of Florence (1438-39) was a final attempt to reconcile East and West. John V [VII?] (1425-48) saw his empire shrinking away and hoped that he might receive help from the West. He appealed to Pope Eugenius to end the breach between East and West. To that end the delegates to the Council of Florence (1438-39) drew up a document covering *filioque*, unleavened bread, purgatory, and papal claims. All the Greeks signed it except for Mark of Ephesus. Many of them recanted on the way home. The Union of Florence was hailed in the West, but overwhelmingly rejected in the East.

The Fall of Constantinople

The Turkish attack began on April 7, 1453. The defenders of the city were outnumbered twenty to one. A final worship service was held in the Hagia Sophia on May 29 with Roman Catholics & Orthodox both participating. The walls were soon breached and the Turkish forces poured in. Emperor Constantine Paleologus died fighting. The city was plundered of many of its remaining treasures. The Hagia Sophia was turned into a mosque. Mohammed II (Ottoman Turks) allowed the Orthodox to retain a patriarch and continue their worship. The Greek Church entered into a period similar to the “Dark Ages” in Western Europe following the barbarian

⁸ Ware, op. cit., p. 68.

invasions. Little intellectual work was done. Priests lacked training and lost influence. Preaching more or less disappeared. Many Greek scholars fled to the West and helped spark the Renaissance. The Eastern Orthodox continued their history of suffering persecution and martyrdom for their faith.

The Expansion of Eastern Orthodoxy

Before 580 the Byzantine Empire was able to keep the Slavic tribes beyond the Danube. In 580, however, nearly one hundred thousand poured into Greece. In the 7th century they settled in Illyria, Moesia, Thrace, and Macedonia. Near the end of the 7th century a Turkish people called the Bulgars invaded this region and established an empire. They became “Slavicized” in the process. Some Christianization of the Slavic-Bulgar people also began.

After the Iconoclastic Controversy the Byzantine Church began serious efforts to convert the Slavic tribes which lay beyond the northern and northwestern frontiers of the empire. Patriarch Photius (ca. 810-ca. 895) is credited with beginning the work. In 862 the Slavic Prince Rostilov of Moravia requested missionaries from Constantinople to help him strengthen Christianity among the Slavs. Photius selected two brothers, Cyril [Constantine] (826-69) and Methodius (ca. 815-85). The brothers knew a Slavic dialect from their youth spent in the region of Thessalonica. They developed an alphabet for the language and translated the Scriptures and other Orthodox writings into Slavic. In Moravia they ran into trouble with German missionaries who were using Latin as the language of Christianity and the *filioque* in the Nicene Creed. The brothers appealed to Pope Nicholas I who sanctioned their work. But after the death of Nicholas and Methodius the Germans drove the missionaries from the East out of Moravia.

Bulgaria for a time wavered between Rome and Constantinople, but finally chose the Eastern Church. In the 9th and 10th centuries a Serbian state developed and was subject for a couple of centuries to other powers including Constantinople and Bulgaria. Serbia came under Orthodox influence from both of these sources. Christianity seems to have come to Romania from Bulgaria in the 9th and 10th centuries. Orthodoxy became attached to the national identity and culture of all these countries.

Photius also sent missionaries to Russia about 864, but the Christian presence was ended by Oleg at Kiev in 878. Christians continued to enter the territory from Byzantium, Bulgaria, and Scandinavia. The Russian Princess Olga became a Christian in 955. Olga’s grandson Vladimir came to power in 980. Vladimir conquered a city which belonged to the Byzantine Empire and insisted on marrying Anna, the sister of the Byzantine Emperor. Through the influence of his grandmother and his wife Vladimir became a Christian and was baptized about 988. His conversion seems to have been genuine. There was a radical change in his behavior and attitude after he became a Christian. Vladimir made Orthodoxy the state religion of his realm (Kiev).

Christianity at first was centered in the cities and upper class, The old paganism slowly gave way. An important monastic community, the Monastery of the Caves (Crypt Monastery) was founded in the 11th century in Kiev by Anthony, a Russian who had lived on Mt. Athos. During the Kievan period of Russian history (988-1237) the Russian Church was subject to Constantinople and the Metropolitans were usually Greek.

When the Mongols extended their empire to Russia, Kiev was destroyed and Russia was laid waste. After the initial conquest (1237-40) the Mongols allowed the conquered territory limited self-rule and permitted the exercise of Christianity. Alexander Nevsky (d. 1263) was the ruler of Novgorod, a city which escaped destruction in 1237 because of its geography. About the same time Novgorod was threatened by Swedes, Germans, and Lithuanians from the west. Nevsky knew he could not fight a war on two fronts. He subjected himself to the Mongols and defeated the western forces. The western forces would have imposed Roman Catholicism The Mongols allowed the Russians to keep Orthodoxy.

During this period the small town of Moscow came to prominence. The Russian Metropolitan Peter settled there in the early 14th century. The Dukes of Moscow led resistance to the Mongols which resulted in a Russian victory in the battle of Kulikovo in 1380.

During the time of Mongol rule the Russians were able to keep some contact with Greece. Whole settlements of Russian monks were to be found on Mt. Athos. The monastic impulse became strong in Russia. St. Sergius (1320-92) established Trinity Monastery near Moscow. From this monastery Sergius' followers went out into the northern regions, founding monasteries and doing mission work among northern tribes. Within a century and a half almost 180 monasteries were founded, Russian missionaries arrived in China in 1686, Alaska in 1794, Japan in 1861, and Korea in 1898.

The power of Moscow gradually grew until the balance of power was so greatly in their favor that the Mongols were no longer able to oppose the Russians. The Mongols withdrew without bloodshed, although they continued to make incursions into the Eastern territories for a long time.

The Russian Orthodox felt betrayed by the Byzantines at the Council of Florence. They thought that it was the hand of God that they were emerging from under the Mongol yoke about the time Constantinople was falling. In 1472 Ivan III of Moscow married Sophia, the niece of the last Byzantine Emperor. The Russian rulers at Moscow adopted the title Tsar and began to think of Moscow as the "third" Rome. The Russian monk Philothesus wrote, "The church of Rome fell for heresy; the gates of the second Rome, Constantinople, were hewn down by the axes of the infidel Turks; but the Church of Moscow, the Church of the new Rome, shines brighter than the sun in the whole universe. Thou art the one sovereign of all Christian folk, thou shouldst hold the reins in awe of God; fear Him Who hath committed them to thee. Two Romes are fallen, but the third stands fast, a fourth there cannot be. Thy Christian kingdom shall not be given to another."⁹

In 1547 Ivan the Terrible was anointed Tsar. He brought about a rather complete domination of the church by the state. In 1589 the Metropolitan Job was elevated to Patriarch. The Russian Church has also had its share of controversies. St. Nilus of Sora (ca, 1433-1508), a hermit from beyond the Volga, complained about the ownership of land by monasteries at a council in 1503. St. Joseph (1439-1515), abbot of Volokalamsk, defended the practice because of the charitable work which the monks carried out. They used their possessions for the poor, not for themselves. Nilus and his fellow "Non-Possessors" claimed that the primary duties of monks involved praying for others and setting an example. Joseph and the "Possessors" also were in favor of the civil government using force (prison, torture, fire) against heretics. Nilus and the Non-Possessors condemned all such activities in favor of tolerance and respect for human freedom, Joseph and the Possessors favored rules, discipline, beauty in worship, corporate worship and liturgical prayer. Nilus and the Non-Possessors emphasized the inner and personal relation between God and the soul, private and mystical prayer. They warned that beauty in worship might become an idol. The Possessors won out, but both Joseph and Nilus were canonized.

A more serious controversy occurred a century and a half later. Tsar Alexis, son of the first Romanov Tsar Michael and grandson of Patriarch Philaret who had served as co-regent with Michael, took notice of a monk named Nikon (1605-1681) in 1646 when the latter was on a journey to Moscow on behalf of monastic business. Alexis first appointed him archimandrite of a monastery in Moscow, and three years later Metropolitan of Novgorod. In 1652 the Patriarch died and Nikon was elected by order of the Tsar. Nikon accepted on three conditions: (1) That he enter office with the approval of the synod, clergy & people; (2) That the high place of the patriarchate be observed; (3) That the Tsar and Sobor obey him in everything as "shepherd & father."

Nikon immediately set out to reform the Russian liturgy and brought in Greek experts to bring the Russian service books in line with Greek usages. He insisted on making the sign of the cross with three fingers and singing the threefold alleluia. He carried his reforms through with all the authority of the state. Nikon was opposed by Avvakum and a group of priests who believed that the church should be reformed by means of the old Russian ways of observance of ecclesiastical rules of prayer, fasting, and strict morality. Nikon had Avvakum exiled to Siberia.

⁹ Quoted by Nicolas Zernov, *The Russians and their Church* (Crestwood, New York: St Vladimir's Press, 1994), p. 49.

From 1652-1658 Nikon's influence was immense in both church and state. He soon fell out of favor with Alexis who did not appreciate his independence. When Alexis snubbed him by refusing to attend a public service, Nikon left town and deserted the patriarchate. A synod was called in 1660 to depose him but could not because there were no other patriarchs in attendance. In 1664 Nikon returned and ordered the Tsar to attend his service. The Tsar ordered him back to a monastery.

A Synod met in Moscow 1666-1667 and this time was attended by the Patriarchs of Alexandria and Antioch and many bishops. The synod condemned Nikon for: (1) cursing bishops without a trial; (2) deserting the throne & leaving the church defenseless; (3) slandering the Tsar & the church; (4) using improper language with his opponents; (5) not treating his judges with proper respect; (6) for administering his office in an arbitrary and cruel way. The synod, however, left Nikon's liturgical reforms in place.

The decision of the synod hardened resistance to the reforms. Those who refused to conform were called the *Raskolniks* (schismatics) or *Old Believers*. They were vigorously persecuted, hunted down, imprisoned, and executed. Some fled to the northern forests, others to Swedish or Polish territories. The Old Believers divided into two groups: The Popovsky (those who had priests) and the Bezpopovsky (no priests). The Popovsky persisted. In the 19th century they received a bishop from the Greek Orthodox Church. Some eventually rejoined the church. In 1881 the state officially recognized the group.

Peter the Great (1672-1725) tried to westernize Russia and consolidate his power, particularly over the church. When Patriarch Adrian died in 1700 Peter did not call a synod to replace him, but appointed a metropolitan as "guardian of the ancient throne." In 1721 Peter declared that a "Holy Governing Synod" comprised of bishops and other ecclesiastical dignitaries appointed by the emperor was to take the place of the patriarch. Peter appointed a "Procurator of the Synod" to preside and maintain imperial control. The emperor retained the right to dismiss any member of the synod and to replace him. The Holy Synod became a department of the secular state. Peter and those who followed him on the throne also greatly curtailed monasticism. Dositheus protested Peter's actions, but in 1723, the four eastern patriarchs recognized the Holy Synod as a replacement for the patriarchate of Moscow. The Holy Synod continued in operation until 1917.

Contacts between Lutheran & Orthodox in the 16th Century

In 1558-59 Patriarch Joasaph II (1555-65) sent Deacon Demetrios Mysos to Wittenberg to learn about Lutheranism. Mysos and Melanchthon became good friends. Melanchthon translated the Augsburg Confession into Greek and gave Mysos a letter for the patriarch. Mysos, however, never returned to Constantinople. Melanchthon died in 1560.

A second contact between Lutherans and the Eastern Orthodox was made during the years 1574-1582. A German Embassy at Constantinople asked the University of Tübingen to send a theologian to serve as embassy chaplain. Tübingen sent Stephen Gerlach and asked him to act as a liaison with the patriarch with the hope of winning over the Eastern Church. The Lutheran theologians Jacob Andreae (1528-1590) and Martin Crusius began correspondence with Patriarch Jeremiah II of Constantinople. They sent him a copy of the Augsburg Confession in Greek. Jeremiah examined the Augsburg Confession and noted places of agreement. He also noted places of disagreement: "the *filioque* phrase in the Nicene Creed, original sin, the priesthood, the confession of sins, free will, justification through faith, and invocation of saints ... Holy Communion, fasting (distinction of foods), monastic vows, and the power of bishops."¹⁰ In 1582 the correspondence, discourses, and letters between the two parties were published in Wittenberg.

¹⁰ George Mastantonis, *Augsburg and Constantinople* (Brookline, Massachusetts: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1982) p. 15.

II. Key Teachings and Emphases of Eastern Orthodoxy¹¹

Eastern Orthodoxy differs from Western Christianity in general, and Lutheranism in particular, in a number of ways. In Eastern Orthodoxy you can sense an influence of Hellenic philosophical thought, particularly Neo-Platonism,¹² to a much greater extent than in the Western Christianity. In addition, Eastern Orthodoxy tends to be much more mystical in its approach to theology. That can perhaps be seen in this Orthodox definition of a theologian: “A theologian is one who prays and one who prays is a theologian.” As a matter of fact, the East recognizes three theologians: the Apostle John, Gregory Nazianzus (329-389), and Symeon New Theologian (949-1022).

Mysticism cannot be defined, but in broad terms it is the religious experience of the individual who seeks a life of harmony, peace and continuous communion with the supreme being. Introspection, contemplation, and solitude are prerequisites for the development of an inner religious experience. Constant prayer assures divine intervention, which illuminates the human soul ... Some Orthodox thinkers have stressed that the exclusive purpose of Christianity is a direct and intuitive experience of God... The mystical union is beyond the senses, imagination, or rational explanation. Not all believers can claim such an experience, and the Church acknowledges that God has bestowed different gifts on different people.¹³

Thus Byzantium never knew any conflict, not even a polarization between theology and what the West calls “mysticism.” Indeed, the whole of Eastern Christian theology has often been called “mystical.” The term is truly correct, provided one remembers that in Byzantium “mystical” knowledge does not imply emotional individualism, but quite the opposite; a continuous communion with the Spirit who dwells in the whole Church. It implies the inadequacies of the

¹¹ Throughout the second part of this paper I will allow the Eastern Orthodox to speak for themselves as much as possible.

¹² **Plotinus** (b. 204 AD) **Neoplatonism**

1. God is “the One”; things emanate or flow from the One; the first emanation is Mind (nous) which is though or world intelligence; the nous is the source of the world which looks upward and downward providing the life principle to all nature and also time; the human soul is an emanation from the world soul.
2. The soul uniting with a body is the product of a fall and means separation from God; matter is the lowest level of the hierarchy of being, the farthest removed from the One.
3. Evil is the absence of something, the lack of perfection; it is not a thing, but the absence of order.
4. The human soul is a microcosm of reality in all its realms (the One, nous, soul nature).
5. Salvation is the soul’s ascent to unity with God through right conduct, correct thinking and the proper disposition of the affections. It ends in union with God in a state of ecstasy.

Origin (ca- 185-251)

1. Saw Hellenistic thought as a preparation for real wisdom, the Holy Scriptures.
2. Tried to convert Hellenistic values and philosophy to the service of Christianity.
3. Old Testament types fulfilled in Christ who is the key to understanding the Scriptures.
4. He promoted the allegorical method—spiritual meaning behind the literal meaning of Scripture.
5. Rejected creation ex nihilo; the world evolves from God and returns to him in an eternal cycle.

¹³ Demetrios J. Constantelos, *Understanding the Greek Orthodox Church* (Brookline, Massachusetts: Hellenic College Press, 1998) p. 141-142.

human intellect and of human language to express the fullness of truth, and the constant balancing of positive theological affirmations about God with the corrective of apophatic theology.¹⁴

Orthodoxy differs from Lutheranism in a number of other important ways. It has been said that the East never had an Augustine. In other words, the East never really grappled with the doctrine of original sin, inherited guilt or human depravity. Soteriology is discussed in terms of theosis rather than justification. In fact, The Orthodox deny salvation by faith alone and say very little about faith at all. As we will see in the following paragraphs, they not only deny *sola fide*, they also deny *sola gratia* and *sola scriptura*,

The Fall into Sin

Eastern Orthodoxy differs from Lutheranism in its understanding of the fall and its consequences. The Eastern Church teaches that the fall into sin was a fall away from grace and God. The fall introduced death, pain, fear, suffering, and defects into human nature, but there is no mention of inherited guilt, loss of the image of God or bondage of the will. The Eastern Church also has a different understanding of Adam's state before the fall.

Orthodoxy, holding as it does a less exalted idea of the human state before the fall, is also less severe than the west in its view of the consequences of the fall. Adam fell, not from a great height of knowledge and Perfection, but from a state of undeveloped simplicity; hence he is not to be judged too harshly for his error. Certainly, as a result of the fall the human mind became so darkened, and human will-power so impaired, that humans could no longer attain to the likeness of God... The image of God is distorted by sin, but never destroyed ... And because we retain the image of God, we still retain free will, although sin restricts its scope. Even after the fall, God does not take away from humans the power to will - to obey or not obey Him ... Orthodoxy repudiates any interpretation of the fall that allows no room for human freedom.¹⁵

Original Sin

In Eastern Orthodoxy there is no concept of inherited guilt or total depravity associated with original sin. Human beings have inherited mortality as a result of the fall rather than sin or guilt.

Most Orthodox theologians reject the idea of 'original guilt' . . . Humans (Orthodox usually teach) automatically inherit Adam's corruption and mortality, but not his guilt; they are guilty only in so far as by their own free choice they imitate Adam. Many western Christian used to believe that whatever a person does in the fallen and unredeemed state, since it is tainted by original guilt, cannot possibly be pleasing to God ... Orthodox would hesitate to say this. And Orthodox have never held (as Augustine and many in the West have done) that unbaptized babies, because tainted with original guilt, are consigned by the just God to the everlasting flames of hell.¹⁶

Theosis

The Eastern Church teaches soteriology in terms of *theosis*. Theosis is a process by which human beings achieve the union with God that was lost in the fall into sin, a process whereby human beings become participants

¹⁴ John Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1979) p. 13-14.

¹⁵ Ware, *op. cit.*, p. 223-224.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 224.

in the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4). The Orthodox do not think of theosis in terms of pantheism, however. Rather they believe that theosis is the process by which human beings are restored to the likeness of God. They draw a distinction between the *image* of God and the *likeness* of God. As a western observer of Orthodoxy explains,

The Eastern fathers also define theosis as the movement from the divine image to the divine likeness. Many (but not all) Orthodox theologians make this distinction. It was the view of Diadochus of Photiki, Maximus, John of Damascus, Palamas, and others that every person is made in the divine image, but only a few attain the transformation of the distorted image into the divine likeness. That is, we all possess the divine image by nature, but only some acquire the divine likeness through vigilance. The image of God is the common property of all people, an inherent aspect of every person's human nature by virtue of creation (Gen. 1:26-27). The image refers primarily to our rationality and capacity for free choice. The likeness of God, on the other hand, signifies a potential similitude to God which requires our free cooperation with God's grace. The image might be thought of as potential likeness, and the likeness as realized image. The image is static, the likeness dynamic. As we cooperate with God's grace, he renews the distorted image in us so that we attain the likeness and consequently become godlike.¹⁷

Synergism

From the preceding it ought to be obvious that Eastern Orthodoxy is thoroughly synergistic. The East believes that sinful human beings not only have the ability but also the obligation to cooperate at every step of the "process" of salvation. As Christophoros Stavropoulos explains,

In the church he has given us all of the objective presuppositions and all the necessary means to achieve our goal. On the other hand, the necessary subjective presuppositions have to be created on our part. The work of theosis, our union with God, is not transmitted to us in some kind of mechanical fashion. Our weakened human nature will not be transformed magically, The change will happen in conjunction with our own efforts. It will be realized with the cooperation of man and God. This subjective aspect of our union with God provides the way of theosis which we must follow.¹⁸

However it is absolutely necessary that people receive divine grace willingly and without coercion. It is absolutely necessary for individuals to freely cooperate with divine grace in order to be able to travel the blessed road of union with God.¹⁹

Scripture and Tradition

The Orthodox reject *sola scriptura*. Scripture and tradition are said to be two equal forms of one organic whole. In reality tradition is given precedence over Scripture. As Vladimir Lossky explains,

¹⁷ Daniel B. Clendenin, *Eastern Orthodox Christianity. A Western Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994) p. 133-134.

¹⁸ Christophoros Stavropoulos, "Partakers of the Divine Nature," in *Eastern Orthodox Christianity. A Contemporary Reader*, edited by Daniel B. Clendenin (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1995) p. 188.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 189,

An advance is made toward a purer notion of tradition if this term is used to designate solely the oral transmission of faith. The separation between tradition and Scripture still subsists, but instead of isolating two sources of revelation, one opposes two modes of transmitting it: oral preaching and writing. It is then necessary to put in one category the preaching of the apostles and of their successors, as well as all preaching of faith performed by a living teaching authority, and in another category the Holy Scripture and all other written expressions of the revealed truth (these latter differing in the degree of their authority recognized by the church). This approach affirms the primacy of tradition over Scripture, since the oral transmission of the apostles' preaching preceded its recording in written form in the canon of the New Testament. It even might be said that the church could dispense with the Scriptures, but she could not exist without tradition.²⁰

In the Eastern view the church stand above Scripture. The East, therefore, denies not only the sufficiency of Scripture, but also the clarity and the authority of Scripture, Bishop Kallistos Ware writes,

It is from the Church that the Bible ultimately derives its authority, for it was the Church which originally decided which books form a part of the Holy Scripture; and it is the Church alone which can interpret the Scripture with authority. There are many sayings in the Bible which by themselves are far from clear, and individual readers, however sincere, are in danger of error if they trust their own personal interpretation... Orthodox, when they read the Scripture accept the guidance of the Church. When received into the Orthodox Church, a convert promises, "I will accept and understand Holy Scripture in accordance with the interpretation which was and is held by the Holy Orthodox Catholic Church of the East, our Mother."²¹

The Sacraments

Sacraments are important in Orthodoxy because in the sacraments God gives his grace through matter. As one Orthodox writer defines, "A Sacrament is a divine rite instituted by Christ and/or the Apostles which through visible signs conveys to us the hidden grace of God. The basic requirements are: divine institution, visible sign, and the hidden power of God."²² Eastern Orthodoxy, however, has never officially enumerated the sacraments, although many will list the same seven as Roman Catholicism. Baptism and the Eucharist are preeminent, but many things can have a sacramental character.

We must realize, however, that the Orthodox never limited the Sacraments to seven. The number seven is rather symbolic and is used to indicate the perfection of grace ... To place a limitation on the number of sacraments is to view them from a very narrow perspective. If a sacrament happens whenever God's grace is mediated to man through matter, then there is no limit to the number of Sacraments. Indeed the whole creation becomes a sacrament. Fr. Thomas Hopko states: "Traditionally the Orthodox understand everything in the church to be sacramental, All of life becomes a sacrament in Christ who fills life itself with the Spirit of God."²³

²⁰ Vladimir Lossky, "Tradition and Traditions," in *Eastern Orthodox Theology: A Contemporary Reader*. p. 128.

²¹ Ware, p. 199-200.

²² Anthony M. Coniaris, *Introducing the Orthodox Church: Its Faith and Life* (Minneapolis: Light and Life Publishing Co., 1982) p.124.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 124.

Baptism is the sacrament of initiation, but must be followed by confirmation or chrismation, an anointing with oil as a seal of the Holy Spirit. Baptism is incomplete without it. The Eastern Church practices infant communion immediately following baptism and chrismation.

In the Eastern Church, baptism and confirmation (the latter being effected through anointment with “holy chrism” blessed by the bishop) are normally celebrated together. Immediately after receiving baptism and confirmation, the child is admitted to Eucharistic communion. There is, therefore, no practical difference between admitting a child or an adult to membership in the Church; in both cases, a human being who belonged to the “old Adam” through his natural birth is introduced to “new life” by partaking of baptism, chrismation, and holy communion. Christian initiation is one single and indivisible act: “if one does not receive the chrism one is not perfectly baptized,” writes Symeon of Thessalonica.²⁴

The East, though often refraining from the Latin scholastic term *transubstantiation*, teaches that the bread and the wine *become* the Body and blood of Christ. This “change” is brought about by the Holy Spirit who is implored in the *epiclesis* of the eucharistic prayer.

As the words of the *Epiclesis* make abundantly plain, the Orthodox Church believes that after the consecration the bread and the wine become in very truth the Body and Blood of Christ: they are not mere symbols, but the reality. But while orthodoxy has always insisted on the *reality* of the change, it has never attempted to explain the *manner* of the change. The Eucharistic Prayer in the Liturgy simply uses the neutral term *metaballo*, to “turn about,” “change,” or “alter.”²⁵

The Eucharist is spoken of as a sacrifice, but not a re-sacrificing of Christ. Rather it is seen as a “making present” of the historic events of the Savior’s sacrifice.

The Eucharist is not a bare commemoration nor an imaginary representation of Christ’s sacrifice, but the sacrifice itself, yet on the other hand it is not a new sacrifice, since the Lamb was sacrificed “once only, for all time.” The events of Christ’s sacrifice—the Incarnation, the Last Supper, the Crucifixion, the Resurrection, the Ascension are not repeated in the Eucharist, but they are *made present*. “During the Liturgy, through its divine power, we are projected to the point where eternity cuts across time, and at this point we become true *contemporaries* with the events which we commemorate.”²⁶

The Orthodox also speak of the sacrament of repentance in which a priest may or may not impose penance.²⁷ Marriage is viewed as a sacrament because “married life ... is a special vocation requiring a particular gift or *charisma* from the Holy Spirit.”²⁸ The Orthodox also practice the “Anointing of the Sick” to aid in healing or to prepare the individual for death.²⁹

The Ministry

²⁴ Meyendorff, *op. cit.*, p. 192.

²⁵ Ware, *op. cit.*, p. 283.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 286-287.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 288-290.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 294.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 296-297.

In the sacrament of “Holy Orders” the East believes that the bishop must confirm the office (major orders = bishop, priest deacon; minor orders = sub-deacon & reader) through ordination. The consecration of a new bishop requires two or three bishops to participate and the people must give their approval of every candidate by shouting “axios” (he is worthy) at the appropriate place in the liturgy.³⁰ The Eastern Church believes in the necessity of apostolic succession and a hierarchical ministry. The East’s understanding of hierarchy, however, differs from Rome’s.

Unlike Protestantism, Orthodoxy insists upon the hierarchical structure of the Church, upon the Apostolic Succession, the episcopate, and the priesthood; it asks the saints for their prayers and intercedes for the departed. Thus far Rome and Orthodoxy agree--but where Rome thinks in terms of the supremacy and the universal jurisdiction of the Pope, Orthodoxy thinks in terms of the five Patriarchs and of the Ecumenical council; where Rome stresses papal infallibility, Orthodox stress the infallibility of the Church as a whole.³¹

The Orthodox Church is a hierarchical Church. An essential element in its structure is the Apostolic Succession of bishops. ‘The dignity of the bishop is so necessary in the Church,’ wrote Dositheus, ‘that without him neither the Church nor the name Christian could exist or be spoken of at all... He is a living image of God on earth... and a fountain of all the sacraments of the Catholic church, through which we obtain salvation.’ ‘If any are not with the bishop,’ said Cyprian, ‘they are not in the Church.’ At his election and consecration an Orthodox bishop is endowed with the threefold power of (1) ruling, (2) teaching, and (3) celebrating the sacraments.³²

Apophatic Theology

The Eastern Orthodox stress the transcendence of God. We cannot know God according to his essence. We can describe him only by apophasis or negation. Apophatic theology describes God only in terms of what he is not. Lutherans also use apophasis in discussing the Trinity, but do not employ the mystical approach inherent in Eastern thought.

We cannot think of God in Himself, in His essence, in His secrecy. To attempt to think of God in Himself reduces us to silence, as neither thought nor language can imprison the infinite in those concepts which, in defining, limit. That is why the Greek Fathers had recourse, for knowledge of God to the *negative* way.³³

The negative (apophatic) way attempts to know God not in what He is (that is to say, in relation to our experience) but in what he is not. It proceeds by a series of negations. The Neo-Platonists and India use this way too, as it is imposed on all thought which turns to God, raising itself towards Him. It culminates, with Plotinus, in the suicide of philosophy, in the metamorphosis of the philosopher into the mystic.³⁴

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 290-291.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 239.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 248-249.

³³ Vladimir Lossky, *Orthodox Theology: An Introduction*. Translated by Ian and Ihita Kesarcodi-Watson (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Press, 1989) p. 31.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

The Trinity

Ever since the addition of the *filioque* to the Nicene Creed and the eventual schism between the East and the West, the East has claimed that the West approaches the mystery of the relationship between the three Persons of the Trinity differently from the East. John Meyendorff explains,

Contrary to the concept which prevailed in the post-Augustinian West and in Latin Scholasticism, Greek theology attributes the *origin* of hypostatic “subsistence” to the *hypostasis* of the Father--not to the common essence. The Father is the “cause” (aitia) and the “principle” (arche) of the divine nature, which is in the Son and in the Spirit. What is even more striking is the fact that this “monarchy” of the Father is constantly used by the Cappadocian Fathers against those who accuse them of “Tritheism”: “God is one,” writes Basil, “because the Father is one.” And the same thought is found in Gregory Nazianzus: “God is the common nature of the three, but the Father is their union (*henosis*).” Pseudo-Dionysius also speaks of the Father as the “source of Divinity,” and John of Damascus in his *Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith* also affirms the essential dependence of the Son and the Spirit upon the *Person* of the Father.³⁵

Caution is always in order when speaking about the *opera ad intra*, the divine works that take place within the Trinity, that speak of the relationship between the Persons of the Trinity. In choosing our words we will always want to be faithful to the truth of Scripture, not saying more or less than the Scriptures say. We will be careful to guard against using terminology that is open to misunderstanding or that gives support to any of the various heresies that have plagued the church. There may or may not be a real difference between the East and West in approach to the understanding of the relationship between the Persons of the Trinity. Caution in regard to this issue is prudent.

Icons

A striking difference between East and West is the role that icons play in Eastern worship and spiritual life. Eastern Orthodox churches and homes are filled with icons, stylized pictures of Christ, Mary, and the saints. The icons serve a threefold purpose: “1. To create reverence in worship; 2. To instruct those who are unable to read; 3. To serve as an existential link between the worshiper and God.”³⁶ Icons serve an educational and a sacramental purpose.

The icon is theology in color. It acknowledges the Incarnation: God became man in Jesus. To deny the icon is to deny the very basis of our salvation. The icon attempt to portray the two natures of Jesus: human and divine-not just human. Icons of the saints portray also the transfigured state of the saint who has been sanctified by the Trinity. An icon is more like a portrait than a photograph in that it portrays what happens to people after God touches them. Filled with the Holy Spirit, the physical body is transformed and becomes like the spiritual body which we shall receive at the Second Coming of Jesus. The icon, blessed by the priest, becomes like a sacrament. It participates in the event it depicts and becomes, as it were, a making present again of the event existentially for the believer.³⁷

³⁵ Meyendorff, *op. cit.*, p. 183.

³⁶ Coniaris, *op. cit.*, p. 171.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 181-182.

Lex orandi

The Liturgy assumes a role in Eastern Orthodoxy that surpasses anything that even the more liturgically minded confessional Lutherans would allow. Lutherans certainly believe that the way we worship flows from our theology. Our worship centers on the means of grace, the gospel in Word and Sacrament, that which is central to our theology. The Eastern Orthodox, however, consider their liturgy not only to be an expression of their theology, but also a *source* of theology. “Through the liturgy a Byzantine recognized and experienced his membership in the Body of Christ. While a Western Christian generally checked his faith against external authority (the magisterium or the Bible), the Byzantine Christian considered the liturgy both a source and expression of his theology... The liturgy maintained the Church’s identity in the midst of a changing world.”³⁸

Because the liturgy is a source of theology for the East care must be taken in using Eastern liturgies. A Western missionary might not grasp all the theological implications or sense the mysticism that is inherent in the Eastern liturgy or understand the cultural significance of what is being said. The Orthodox see meaning in everything they say and do in the liturgy. Demetrios Constantelos writes,

The Liturgy epitomizes the dogma, doctrine, code of ethics, cult, community-structure and the metaphysical or transcendent vision of Greek Orthodox Christianity as it developed in the course of a millennium. Briefly, these categories are used in a specific meaning. Dogma describes the accepted and codified faith of the Community; doctrine refers to theological teachings subject to development; the term code is used to describe the ethical imperatives, the rules of and obligations toward personal and Community action. A cult involves the ritual and symbolic movement and activity in the execution of the liturgy, such as processions, candles, and signs; Community-structure explains the nature of relationships among followers of the common faith, that is the principles that bind individual believers into a living organism and structured organization--the Church.³⁹

A Western observer may be struck by a number of things when attending an Orthodox service. Worship is rather informal--people feel free to come and go and to move around during the service. They may come late and proceed to the front of the church to light a candle before an icon, talking to any friends or relatives they see. The clergy preside in a rather informal way--ceremonial movements are not minutely prescribed. The services can be lengthy and the people stand throughout. The services are chanted without instrumental accompaniment. Historically there was no instrumental music in Eastern Orthodox services. In America today organs, etc., are becoming more common. “Until very recent times all singing in Orthodox Churches was usually done by the choir; today, a small but increasing number of parishes in Greece, Russia, Romania, and the diaspora are beginning to revive congregational singing if not throughout the service, then at any rate at special moments such as the Creed and the Lord’s Prayer.”⁴⁰ The congregation participates in spoken litanies that occur several times during worship.

The historic liturgies of both the East and West have their roots in the synagogue worship of the 1st century. There was a great flowering of liturgical activity in the 4th and 5th centuries. In the East subsequent liturgical development revolved around the imperial pomp at the Hagia Sophia in Constantinople and the contrasting worship in the monasteries. The Eastern or Byzantine Rite is seen as a synthesis of these two elements. There also developed a two-tiered symbolism in the liturgy.

³⁸ Meyendorff, *op. cit.*, p. 115.

³⁹ Constantelos, *op. cit.*, p. 165.

⁴⁰ Ware, *op. cit.*, p. 268.

In the cosmic or hierarchical scheme, church and ritual are an image of the present age of the church, in which divine grace is mediated to those in the world (nave) from the divine abode (sanctuary) and its heavenly worship (the liturgy enacted there), which in turn images forth its future consummation (eschatological), when we shall see that abode in glory.

In the economic or anamnestic scheme, the sanctuary with the altar is at once: the Holy of Holies of the tabernacle decreed by Moses; the Cenacle of the last Supper; Golgatha of the crucifixion; and the Holy Sepulchre of the resurrection, from which sacred gifts of the Risen Lord--his Word and His body and blood--issue forth to illumine the sin-darkened world.⁴¹

Orthodox liturgical writings are extensive. There are several volumes containing hymns, services, sacraments, liturgies, and prayers for almost every occasion in the Orthodox Church. However, in Orthodoxy there are four main liturgies.

- a. The Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom which is the most common liturgy celebrated on Sundays and weekdays,
- b. The Liturgy of St. Basil the Great which is celebrated only ten times a year, mainly during the Sundays of Lent. St. Basil's liturgy is very much like that of St. John Chrysostom with the exception of the prayers offered privately by the priest. These are much longer.
- c. The Liturgy of St. James, the Brother of the Lord, which is celebrated only once a year on the Feast Day of St. James, October 23, and only in certain places such as Jerusalem.
- d. The Liturgy of the Pre-Sanctified Gifts which is used only on Wednesdays and Fridays of Lent and on the final three days of Holy Week. It is called *pre-sanctifies* because no consecration takes place. The communion elements distributed are reserved from the Eucharist of the previous Sunday. Thus the *Pre-Sanctified* is not a eucharistic liturgy but rather an evening Vesper Service that includes the distribution of pre-consecrated elements of Holy Communion. Its purpose is to offer us more frequent opportunity during Lent to receive Holy Communion. It is used during Lent because the normal liturgy is an extremely joyful expression of the Resurrection and is considered to be inappropriate to the deeply penitential season of Lent.⁴²

The liturgical year is carefully followed so that every year of his life a Christian is confronted with the historic events in the story of salvation and each year must make a response to them.

The Liturgical year begins on September 1. Following Easter, which is the pre-eminent festival come the TWELVE GREAT FEASTS which are divided into two groups, i.e. the Feasts of the Mother of God and the Feasts of our Lord. The Feasts of the Mother of God are:

- 1 . The Birth of the Theotokos (September 8)
2. The Entry of the Theotokos into the Temple (November 21)
3. The Meeting of our Lord (February 2)
4. The Annunciation (March 25)
5. The Dormition of the Theotokos (August 15)

The Feasts of our Lord are:

- 1 . The Exaltation of the Cross (September 14)

⁴¹ Robert F. Taft, *The Byzantine Rite: A Short History* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1992) p. 69.

⁴² Coniaris, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

2. Christmas (December 25)
3. Theophany (January 6)
4. Palm Sunday (one week before Easter)
5. The Ascension of our Lord (40 days after Easter)
6. Pentecost (50 days after Easter)
7. The Transfiguration of our Lord (August 6)

Easter is not one of the Twelve Great Feasts because it is considered to be the source of them all.⁴³

The “Meeting of our Lord” is Jesus’ presentation in the temple. The “Dormition of the Theotokos” commemorates the death of Mary.

The Saints and Mary

The Orthodox pray for those who have died and ask those who have died to pray for them. They see the church as a unified whole without distinguishing the church on earth from the church in heaven. Bishop Ware writes,

In God and His Church there is no division between the living and the departed, but all are one in the love of the Father. Whether we are alive or whether we are dead, as members of the Church we still belong to the same family, and still have a duty to bear one another’s burdens. Therefore just as Orthodox Christians here on earth pray for one another and ask for one another’s prayers, so they pray for the faithful departed and ask the faithful departed to pray for them. Death cannot sever the bond of mutual love which links the members of the Church together.⁴⁴

The Orthodox, in fact, invoke the saints in prayer and evidently assume that the saints are aware of Christians on earth and can hear their request to pray for them. The Orthodox also invoke angels. A special reverence is given to Mary, the mother of God. They try, however, to distinguish carefully between the worship that is to be offered to God alone and the reverence that is to be given to Mary.

An Orthodox invokes in prayer not only the saints but the angels, and in particular her or his guardian angel. The angel “fences us around with their intercessions and shelter us under their protecting wings of immaterial glory.”

Among the saints a special position belongs to the Blessed Virgin Mary, whom Orthodox reverence as the most exalted of God’s creatures., “more honored than the cherubim and more exalted than the seraphim.” Note that we have termed her “most exalted *among God’s creatures*;” Orthodox like Roman Catholics, *venerate* or *honour* the Mother of God, but in no sense do the members of either Church regard her as a fourth person of the Trinity, nor do they assign to her the *worship* due to God alone. In Greek theology the distinction is very clearly marked: there is a special word, *latreia*, reserved for the worship of God, while for the veneration of the Virgin entirely different terms are employed (*duleia*, *hyperduleia*, *prosknesis*).⁴⁵

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

⁴⁴ Ware, *op. cit.*, p. 254.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 257.

Although the Orthodox generally reject the Roman idea of purgatory they are somewhat vague about the state of the departed and why the departed might benefit from the prayers of those on earth.

Orthodox are convinced that Christians here on earth have a duty to pray for the departed and they are confident that the dead are helped by such prayers. But precisely in what way do our prayers help the dead? What exactly is the condition of souls in the period between death and the resurrection of the Body on the Last Day? Here Orthodox teaching is not entirely clear, and has varied somewhat at different times. In the seventeenth century a number of Orthodox writers--most notably Peter of Moghila and Dositheus in his *Confession*--upheld the Roman Catholic doctrine of Purgatory or something very close to it ... Today most if not all Orthodox theologians reject the idea of Purgatory, at least in this form. The majority would be inclined to say that the faithful departed do not suffer at all. Another school holds that perhaps they suffer, but, if so, their suffering is of a purificatory but not an expiatory character; for when a person dies in the grace of God, then God forgives him all his sins and demands no more expiatory penalties: Christ, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, is our *only* atonement and satisfaction. Yet a third groups would prefer to leave the whole matter entirely open.⁴⁶

Conclusion

Eastern Orthodoxy is complex and often difficult for Westerners to grasp. Yet familiarity with the basic tenets of Orthodoxy and an understanding of the history of this branch of Christianity is essential for those working in Eastern Europe. I hope that this little review has been of some value and might serve as a base on which you can build. An on-going examination and discussion of the history and teachings of Eastern Orthodoxy in general, and its local expression in the regions in which you work will be most profitable. May God bless your study and the important work he has called you to do.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 254-255.