

5. Byzantine Christianity & Eastern Orthodoxy [cont.]

I. Loss and Expansion

A. Conversion of the Slavs

Photius, Patriarch of Constantinople, sent two missionaries to convert the Slavs: Cyril (birth name Constantine) and Methodius, brothers from Thessalonica. Fluent in the Slavonic dialect spoken around Thessalonica, they developed an alphabet (Glogilitic) and translated Biblical and liturgical books into what is now known as Old Church Slavonic. The Cyrillic alphabet was developed from Greek by their followers and named in Cyril's honor.

In 863 they went to Moravia. After their deaths, Germans expelled their disciples, who went to Bulgaria. Though unsuccessful in establishing an Orthodox Church in Moravia, they are honored as the Apostles to the Slavs. The Slavic people heard the Bible and liturgy in their own language. Church Slavonic is still the liturgical language of Russian and some other Slavic churches.

The Church was established in Bulgaria, Serbia and Romania (a Latin-based language).

988 baptism of Vladimir, ruler of Rus' in Kiev. Prior to this he had sent emissaries to various countries to find the "true faith": Bulgaria, Germany, Rome. They were not impressed. But when they attended Divine Liturgy in Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, they reported back, "We knew not whether we were in heaven or earth." The Byzantine faith became the state religion of Russia until 1917. Vladimir married the sister of the Byzantine emperor to cement the relationship.

B. Moslem Conquest

The Moslems expanding out of Arabia conquered 3 of the 4 eastern Patriarchies: Jerusalem (634), Antioch (637), Alexandria (641).

1453 Ottoman Turks captured Constantinople. They had already absorbed the Orthodox territories of Bulgaria (1396), Serbia (Battle of Kosovo 1389), and Romania. The Moslems allowed the Christians to remain Christians, but to live as second-class citizens, paying a head tax. Under the *millet* system, the head of the Orthodox Church (Patriarch) was also the head of the Christian nation, the *Rum millet* (Roman nation).

C. Russia

Byzantium was the earthly image (icon) of the heavenly Jerusalem. The emperor was God's representative on earth, the icon of God's rule. There was no Church-State separation; rather the two formed a dyarchy: priesthood (care of souls; teaching the faith) and imperial power (control of bodies; protecting the faith). In 1453 this was lost.

Only Russia remained as an independent Orthodox nation.

In 1237 Kiev had been sacked by the Mongols, who held suzerainty 1237-1480. In the 14th century Moscow had superseded Kiev. In 1453 Moscow became autocephalous (independent church).

Ivan the Great, Grand Duke of Moscow, ended the Golden Horde's suzerainty over the Rus'.

In 1472 he married the niece of the last Byzantine emperor, and assumed Byzantine titles and symbols: the title of Tsar (< Lat. Caesar), the double-headed eagle. In 1589 the head of the Russian church was elevated from Metropolitan to Patriarch, fifth in rank after Jerusalem. Moscow came to be seen as the third Rome.

In 1721 Peter the Great abolished the Patriarchate. It was re-established in 1917.

D. Dissolution of the Ottoman Empire

In the 19th century several nations gained independence from the Turks, and churches were re-established, independent of the Patriarch in Constantinople:

1. Greece: independence 1830; church organized 1833; recognized by the Patriarch 1850.

2. Romania: independence 1878; church organized 1864, recognized 1885.
3. Bulgaria: independence 1878; church re-established 1871, recognized 1945.
4. Serbia: independence 1878; church organized and recognized 1879.

II. The Eastern Orthodox Church today

A. Autocephalous Churches

The Eastern Orthodox Church comprises mainly 14 autocephalous churches:

- 1. Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople: incl. Mount Athos, Exarchate of Patmos; Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Thyateira and Great Britain, of Italy and Malta, of America, of Australia; etc.
- 2-4 the other three ancient patriarchies: Greek Orthodox Church of Alexandria; of Antioch (incl. Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America); of Jerusalem.
- 5-14 national orthodox churches: Orthodox Church of Russia, Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria, Georgia, Cyprus, Greece, Poland, Albania, Czech lands & Slovakia.

B. Evangelical Movement to Orthodoxy

What attracts evangelicals to the Orthodox Church?

1. mystery: transcendence in worship; apophatic theology versus Western rationalism
2. tradition: rooted in 4th-6th centuries
3. claim to be the True church: the one holy, catholic and apostolic church

In the USA evangelicals have entered two main groups:

- Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America
- Orthodox Church in America (OCA)