
The Encyclopedia of Eastern Orthodox Christianity

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Edited by John Anthony McGuckin

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John Anthony McGuckin

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A–M

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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Orthodoxy is old Christianity, but not antique; for it retains a freshness about it which belies all attempts (by its enemies and some of its supporters) to render it into a sustained exercise in antiquarianism. It is old in wisdom, we like to think, but fresh in its evangelical spirit: renewed by that Omega which is also the Alpha, the beginning, not simply the end. It is a Christian experience that many think they know, and often characterize in terms of its "traditionalism," its slowness to react to many things. This of course can often be a good thing. Being dogged, for example, allowed Orthodoxy to outlive, and more than outlive, its persecutors of the 20th century who greatly outmatched the ferocity of the ancient persecutors of the church; for the 20th century was (by any account) the age of the greatest persecutions the Church of Christ has ever endured. No Nero, Diocletian, or Galerius could ever match up to the oppressions put upon the Eastern Church by the Stalins, Hoxhas, or Ceaușescus of the age of totalitarians. In this gloomy herding together of the Eastern Orthodox world by communist authorities, the witness had to be one of the most basic facts of endurance. Those who know Orthodoxy more intimately than simply seeing its quaintness or its traditionalism will recognize its heroic witness in the course of the 20th century.

Today, after the irreversible fall into the dust of so many of these tyrants, who once thought they would rule forever, the

intoxicating sense of joyful liberation has often passed away too, in much of Soviet-zone Eastern Europe, and the colder breezes of reality coming after the heady 1990s have been felt. Serious economic and social disorders are still to be dealt with as a long-lasting legacy of the destruction communism left behind itself. For the Orthodox Church, which suffered the purging of so many of its leaders over so many decades, and the wholesale destruction of its social mission, its church buildings, and its educational system, a similar scale of traumatic damage is undoubtedly going to be a legacy that will continue for a few generations to come. After such levels of trauma, recovery takes longer than after simple setbacks. It is perhaps the destiny of our times to see Orthodoxy climbing back up from its knees once more, while at the same time Christian practice and culture in Western Europe seems to enter into a new bleak era, neglected and despised by an alleged new humanism which mocks its own ancestral religious tradition as well as its ancient and inseparable moral and intellectual heritage: things which betoken long-term social problems in terms of the transmission of societal civilized values and ethico-social cohesion in western societies.

Orthodoxy, while always having a robust sense of its theological identity, is in the course of this present era in a constant state of flux; involving growth, but also drawing the Eastern Church into areas of indeterminate conditions: strange

environments it has not yet been fully able to parallel with familiar ancient precedents so as to help it navigate towards a new hermeneutic. Sometimes western commentators, however unbalanced they may be, have been given a hearing as they attempted to draw the boundaries of civilization as concomitant with the western political and religious borders of the Mediterranean, excluding the Orthodox nations as if they were of little or no importance. This position (which in my mind is a cleverly masked form of prejudice) conveniently forgets that Orthodoxy has had its schools smashed by hostile conquerors or oppressive totalitarians not only for the last seventy years, but for the last five hundred. How many centuries does it take to reestablish an intellectual tradition? A life of the mind to match the élan of a cultural and artistic fabric? While the West was establishing the Renaissance on the base of its late medieval university cities, the Christian East was falling relentlessly before ascendant Islamic military might. It was a submergence into a forcibly imposed Sharia law, a twilight existence for a conquered *ethnos*, that permitted partial cultic existence to the Orthodox Church but certainly not an independently continuing intellectual life. The schools, seminaries, printing presses, and caucuses of intellectuals belonging to the Orthodox were mostly doomed and soon were almost all entirely extinguished except for symbolic residues – those few able to secure their independence from the power of the Ottomans, or to pay for a limited degree of autonomy. After the fall of Constantinople in 1453, Russia continued on, and Ukraine, Romania, Athos, and Sinai became, at various times, fortresses of Orthodox culture under immense external pressures. But even so, Orthodoxy lost its university ethos definitively; lost its broadly spread

intelligentsia, its sponsoring aristocracy; lost therefore its grasp on the tiller of culture-making – a role it had so clearly excelled in for its first millennium. Instead, it had to, by force of hostile circumstance, turn more inward towards cultural and ecclesiastic preservation. Nothing replaced the university and aristocratic caucuses (the leavening effect of the imperial court and its ability to attract international talent to the Orthodox center) and monastic culture took up the fallen crown. Monastic leadership has guided and safeguarded Orthodoxy ever since, and made a faithful job of it; but the wider intellectual culture of the Eastern Church was inevitably narrowed into slower and more mystical channels than Orthodoxy had known as part of its vital fabric in earlier, more independent and more flourishing political circumstances. Those who in recent centuries have often scorned or mocked the alleged inability of Orthodox theologians and church leaders to match the intellectual sophistication of the West, are often laughing, albeit unwittingly, at the sorrows of conquered peoples – in a manner like the Queen of France who thought cake would substitute sufficiently well for the lack of bread.

Orthodox Christian intellectual life, however, once shone radiantly in so many periods past, and just as at times its radiance seemed self-assured, so too, just as often, historic reversals and disasters have dimmed it, sometimes crushed it for many generations. The schools of Byzantium were once a model to the world, reformulating the glories of patristic eloquence and extending their spirit of biblical interpretation so as to make a sustained set of variations on Roman Law and Civilization, such that the ages of Byzantium truly became a monument of world Christian culture. But even at their height these cultural

achievements were cut short. Long before the last emperor fell in the Saint Romanos gate at Constantinople in 1453, the eastern Roman capital's intellectual life was a shadow of its former vitality. It was falling prey to the temptation to live in a virtual reality (a temptation the Orthodox Church must resist in all generations). To take one example: the medieval scholar Theodore Metochites, a leading Byzantine astronomer, Grand Logothete of the Empire, and the builder of that exquisite Constantinopolitan church St. Savior in Chora, used the newly invented Arabian astrolabe for all his practical navigational computations, but continued to comment at length upon Ptolemy. He looked and touched, but did not see. Constantinople towards the end of its glory had, for several centuries, nurtured the exiles from other major Christian centers of learning, such as Edessa, Alexandria, Antioch, Caesarea, or Jerusalem, all of which themselves had once shone bright with the flash of Greek Fire as schools of Christian learning in Antiquity but which, one by one, had fallen to the ravages of enemies or time, and often ceased to exist as Christian centers at all. After the collapse of Byzantium the Russian tsars saw themselves as the inheritors of the duty to protect Orthodoxy, calling their nation "The Third Rome."

Today, although Russian Orthodoxy is by far the largest power bloc of the world Orthodox families, no one seriously expects a Christian tsar to reemerge; and not all have happy memories about the tsar's effect on the church when he was master of the Russian Empire. The patriarchate of Constantinople was used by the Ottoman sultans in a way that gave it, through the late medieval period and through to the end of the 19th century, an international prestige as leader of all Eastern Christians in the Ottoman imperial domains. But today the

Phanar suffers, and its local Christians have dwindled to the point of vanishing. Its ecclesial and political base now effectively resides in North America and Australia. However, it retains its ancient prestige among world Orthodoxy, in a way excelling the other ancient patriarchates such as Alexandria or Antioch or Jerusalem, who retain more of a ceremonial role in world Orthodox affairs. By the grace of God the patriarch of Constantinople has not dwindled to the status of a canonical "virtual reality" and still exercises a high moral authority above and beyond his role in specific legal church affairs. Other Orthodox patriarchs who were once long silenced, or degraded by oppressors, have again come into freedom. The presence of learned and insightful leaders in these high patriarchal sees will continue to be of critical importance in this age of mass media. But as articulators of world Orthodoxy the collective *Sobor* of these national patriarchs increasingly has to look beyond their nations and national interests, to wider and more inclusive horizons. The reemergence of the large Eastern European Orthodox Churches has changed the world scene definitively as the 21st century now progresses; and what world Orthodoxy will do in the coming century remains to be seen. But the prospects look good, and hopeful, as new and highly educated leaders emerge, and the schools and monasteries, theological academies and church social projects slowly come back into existence across the former communist world.

Orthodoxy also started to come of age in the New World in the latter part of the 20th century. It developed a significant body of theologians who are at once contemporary and yet rooted in past precedents, and commonly joined together in a spiritual harmony bearing a deep respect for tradition. In this, modern Orthodoxy

has, in a real sense, an advantage that its theologians and spiritual teachers, its bishops, and patriarchs are all, genuinely, bonded together in the faith, and share that faith with the laity, intelligent or simple, in a way that many other ecclesial groups in the West cannot any longer sustain. These things will prove to be great resources for an intellectual flowering of Orthodox intellectual life in the 21st century. Orthodoxy's spiritual resources, its monastic centers, its continued central focus on liturgy and prayer, on the fidelity to the gifts of the Spirit, remain at its core; and as long as they do the inner life and spirit of the church will itself remain evergreen.

Today, unarguably so, there are also numerous international signs of a reviving intellectual life among the Orthodox Greeks, Russians, Romanians, Serbs, and many other Orthodox church families. Several historic theological faculties have reopened or have been newly founded, all promising signs for the future. Throughout the English-speaking world, Orthodoxy is beginning to be represented in several secular schools of higher learning, and engaging with Protestant and Catholic iterations of theology on its own terms, offering its distinctive voice in the expression of Christian theological concern on matters of doctrine, ethics, ecumenicity, and worship.

This encyclopedia has been written, almost entirely so, out of the talents of English-speaking Orthodox thinkers, across a wide international spectrum. It is therefore one of the few existing resources, of the highest intellectual standard, that allow Orthodoxy to speak with its own voice, in its own intonations, no longer as a subaltern. What has emerged is authentically Orthodox scholarship in full engagement with historic and theological evidences, open in mentality and aspect, and at the same time deeply rooted in its values and

spiritual traditions and proud to articulate them. The encyclopedia is itself one bright sign of the emerging revival of Orthodox intellectual life at the highest levels of the Academy, offering a reference resource for the life and culture of Eastern Christianity which will, on publication, be the largest and one of the most authoritative reference works in the English language for world Orthodoxy.

It has been a privilege and a pleasure working with all the contributors who are acknowledged national and international experts in their own fields. It has also been a delight to have worked with Wiley-Blackwell's team of professionals. The press not only sponsored and encouraged this work from the outset, but have been at pains to make it appear in the most artistic way possible; aligning their skill in technology with a clear eye for the beautiful (*to kalon*). In hard copy, this is a lovely set of volumes that will grace any study and enhance any academic library as an indispensable study tool. In its electronic form this is destined to be a worldwide resource that will illuminate matters of the Eastern Christian tradition at the touch of a button – something that the ancient Orthodox theologians and mystics would surely have wondered at. Special thanks are due to Wiley-Blackwell's Executive Commissioning Editor, Rebecca Harkin, whose enthusiasm moved the project towards the light of day. Thanks too are owed to Sophie Oliver for her indefatigable work in putting the materials together on the Web, to Brigitte Lee Messenger and Jack Messenger for copyediting, and to Barbara Duke and Jane Taylor for their labors in production and image management.

The encyclopedia benefited notably from the wisdom and critical insight of Revd. Dr. Konstantin Gavrilkin, who also

contributed many of the articles relating to Slavic Orthodoxy. The Assistant Editors are both young Orthodox intellectuals whose research has already broken new ground. The first, the Revd. Dr. Julia (Seraphima) Konstantinovskiy, a monastic of the community of Fr. Sophronios in Essex and now a tutor in the Oxford University Faculty of Theology, is an expert in early Christian studies, and a world-class *perita* in matters relating to the spiritual tradition of early monastic communities, especially the Greek and Syriac circles around Evagrius Pontike. Dr. Justin Lasser has worked in fields as disparate as the Nag Hammadi Gnostic texts, Proto-Syrian Christianity (with a doctoral dissertation from Union Theological Seminary on the Thomas tradition), and Ethiopian Orthodoxy, learning Ge'ez along with Coptic, Greek, and Syriac to enable him better to understand the world of the early fathers and mothers. It has been a delight to work alongside

them both, and to feel that with such a "Cloud of Witnesses" as these, and the splendid array of writers that we amassed for this project, the appearance of this encyclopedia is not an errant swallow, but a further sign of what a great patristic divine, John Henry Newman, himself once called (in a different time and circumstance) a "Second Spring."

It is with pleasure, and a sense of a very large and important scholarly task brought to a fine completion, that I can now put this work before the reading public, more than confident too that it will serve the affairs of Church and Academy luminously for many decades to come.

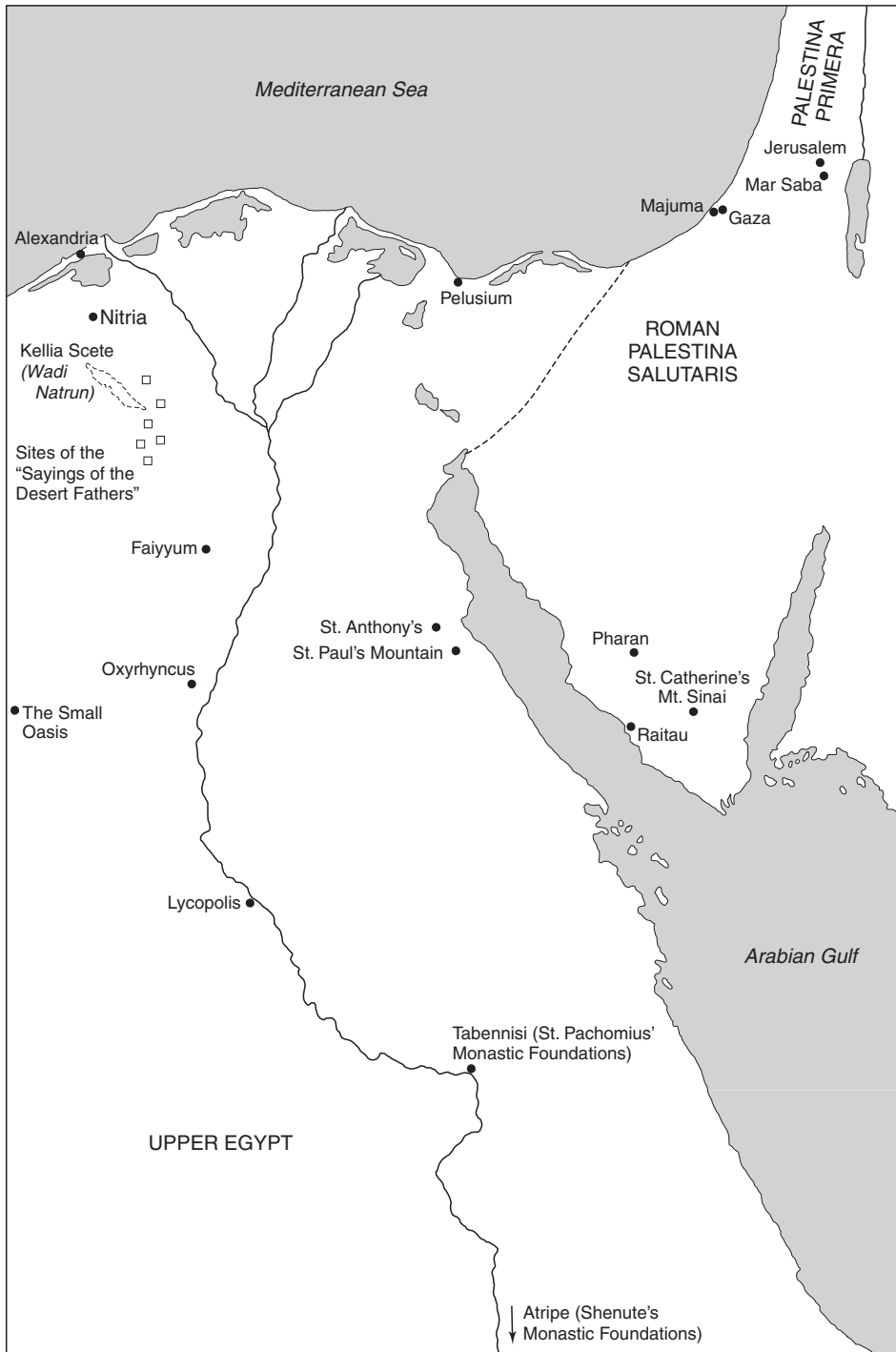
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MAPS

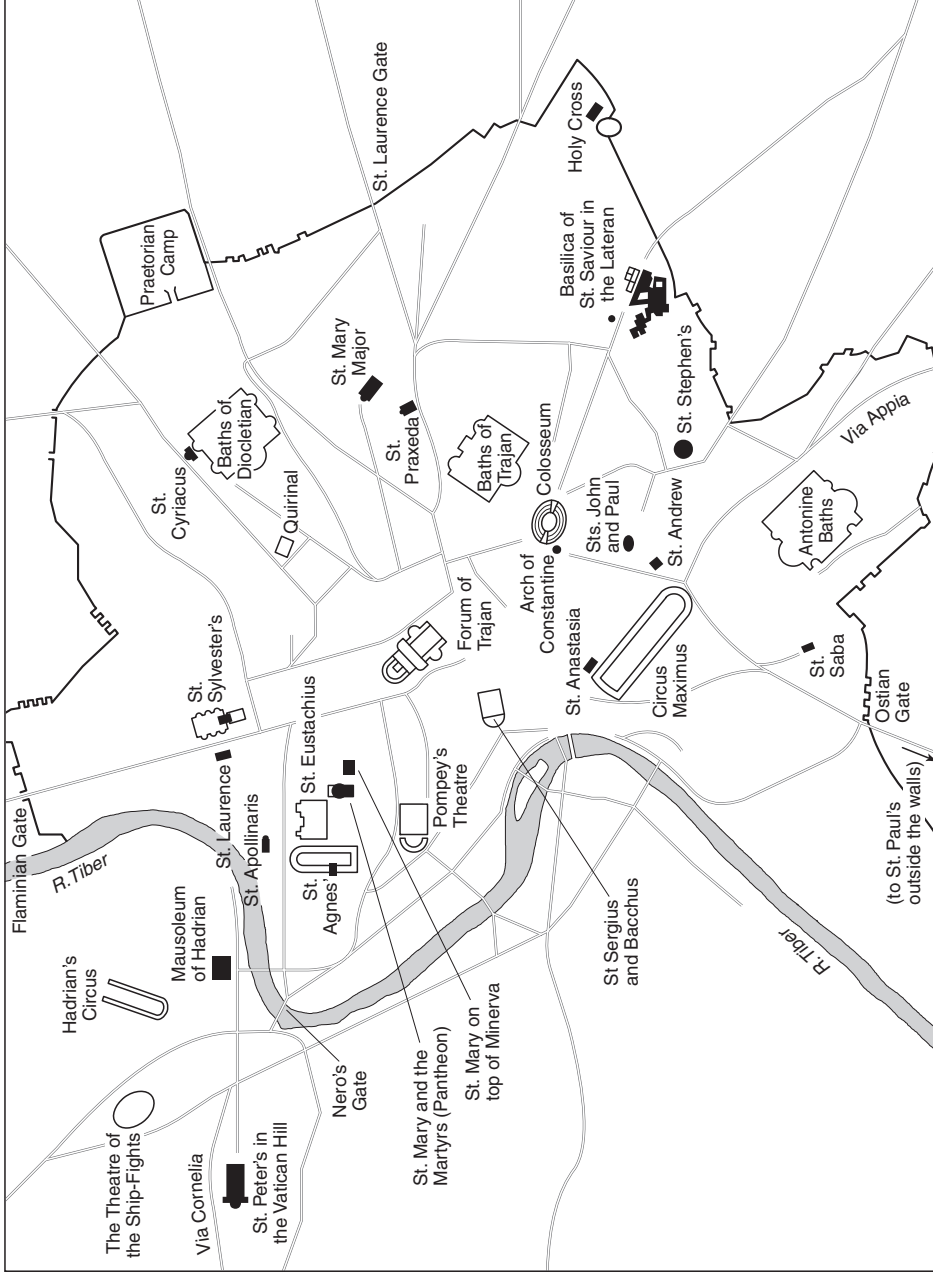
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Map 1 The Early Christian world.



Map 2 Early Christian Egypt.



Map 3 Early Christian Rome.

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