

The Encyclopedia of Eastern Orthodox Christianity

Edited by
John Anthony McGuckin

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BRIEF CONTENTS

List of Entries	vii
List of Illustrations	xiii
Editors and Contributors	xvii
Preface and Acknowledgments	xix
Maps	xxiv
Eastern Orthodox Christianity A–Z	1–646
Appendix: Foundational Documents of Orthodox Theology	647
Index	772

LIST OF ENTRIES

- Afanasiev, Nicholas (1893–1966)
 see Contemporary Orthodox
 Theology
- Africa, Orthodoxy in
Akathistos
- Albania, Orthodox Church of
- Alexandria, Patriarchate of
- Ambo
- Amnos
- Anagnostes (Reader)
- Analogue
- Anaphora
- Anastasimatarion*
- Angels
- Anglicanism, Orthodoxy and
- Anointing of the Sick
- Antidoron
- Antimension
- Antioch, Patriarchate of
- Apocalyptic *see* Eschatology
- Apodeipnon
- Apodosis
- Apolysis
- Apolytikion
- Apophaticism
- Aposticha
- Apostolic Succession
- Archdeacon
- Architecture, Orthodox
 Church
- Arianism
- Armenian Christianity
- Artoklasia
- Artophorion
- Asceticism
- Assyrian Apostolic Church
 of the East
- Asterisk
- Australasia, Orthodox Church in
- Autocephaly *see* United States of
 America, Orthodoxy in the
- Automelon *see* Idiomelon
- Baptism
- Barlaam of Calabria
 (ca. 1290–1348)
- Behr-Sigel, Elisabeth (1907–2005)
 see Contemporary Orthodox
 Theology
- Belarus *see* Lithuania, Orthodoxy
 in; Ukraine, Orthodoxy in the
- Berdiaev, Nikolai A. (1874–1948)
- Bible
- Bioethics, Orthodoxy and
- Blessing Rituals
- Bogomils
- Bulgakov, Sergius (Sergei)
 (1871–1944)
- Bulgaria, Patriarchal Orthodox
 Church of
- Caerularios, Michael (d. 1059)
- Calendar
- Canon (Liturgical)
- Canon Law
- Canonization
- Cappadocian Fathers
- Cassia the Poet *see* Women
 in Orthodoxy
- Catechumens
- Charity
- Chastity
- Cheesefare (Sunday of)
- Cherubikon
- China, Autonomous Orthodox
 Church of
- Chorepiscopos
- Chrismation

- Christ
 Church (Orthodox Ecclesiology)
 Communion of Saints
 Confession
 Constantinople, Patriarchate of
 Contemporary Orthodox Theology
 Coptic Orthodoxy
 Council of Chalcedon (451)
 Council of Constantinople I (381)
 Council of Constantinople II (553)
 Council of Constantinople III
 (680–681)
 Council of Ephesus (431)
 Council of Nicea I (325)
 Council of Nicea II (787)
 Cross
 Cyprus, Autocephalous Orthodox
 Church of
 Cyril Lukaris, Patriarch of
 Constantinople (1572–1638)
 Czech Lands and Slovakia,
 Orthodox Church of
 Deacon
 Diaconess
 Death (and Funeral)
 Deification
 Deisis
 Desert Fathers and Mothers
 Diakonikon
 Divine Liturgy, Orthodox
 Dormition
 Dostoevsky, Fyodor Mikhailovich
 (1821–1881)
 Doxastikon
 Eastern Catholic Churches
 Ecology
 Ecumenical Councils
 Ecumenism, Orthodoxy and
 Education
 Eiletarion
 Eileton
 Ekphonesis
 Elder (Starets)
 Eleousa (*Umilenie*)
 Environmental Ethics *see* Ecology
 Eothina
 Ephymnion *see* Kontakion
 Epiclesis
 Episcopacy
 Epitachelion
 Eschatology
 Estonia, Orthodox Church in
 Ethics
 Eucharist
Euchologion
 Evangelism
 Evlogitaria
 Exaposteilarion
 Exarch
 Excommunication
 Exorcism
 Fasting
 Fatherhood of God
 Feasts
Filioque
 Finland, Autonomous Orthodox
 Church of
 Florence, Council of (1438–1439)
 Florensky, Pavel Alexandrovich
 (1882–1937)
 Florovsky, Georges V. (1893–1979)
 Fools, Holy
 Georgia, Patriarchal Orthodox
 Church of
 Glykophilousa
 Gnosticism
 Gospel
 Grace
 Great Week
 Greece, Orthodox Church of
 Gregory of Cyprus *see* Lyons,
 Council of (1274)
 Hades
 Hagiography
 Healing
Heirmologion
 Heresy
 Hesychasm

- Hexapsalmoi
Hieratikon
 Hodegitria
 Holy Spirit
 Holy Trinity
Horologion
 Humanity
 Hymnography
 Hypakoe
 Iasi (Jassy), Synod of (1642)
 Iconoclasm
 Iconography, Styles of
 Iconostasis
 Icons
 Idiomelon
Imiaslavie
 Incarnation (of the Logos)
 Incense
 Islam, Orthodoxy and
 Ison *see* Music (Sacred)
 Japan, Autonomous Orthodox
 Church of
 Jeremias II, Patriarch (1572–1595)
 Jerusalem, Patriarchate of
 Jesus Prayer
 John Bekkos *see* Lyons, Council of
 (1274)
 Judaism, Orthodoxy and
 Judgment
 Kalymauchion
 Katavasia
 Kathisma
 Kathismata *see* Idiomelon;
 Kathisma
 Kazakhstan, Orthodoxy in
 Khomiakov, Aleksey S. (1804–1860)
 Klobuk *see* Kalymauchion
 Kollyva
 Kollyvadic Fathers
 Kontakion
 Koukoulion *see* Kalymauchion;
 Kontakion
 Lamb *see* Lance; Proskomedie
 (Prothesis)
 Lampadarios *see* Music (Sacred)
 Lance
 Latvia, Orthodoxy in
 Lithuania, Orthodoxy in
 Liturgical Books
 Logos Theology
 Lossky, Vladimir (1903–1958)
 Love
 Lyons, Council of (1274)
 Malankara Orthodox Syrian
 Church
 Mandorla
 Maronites
 Marriage
 Maximus the Greek (1470–1555)
 Meatfare *see* Cheesefare (Sunday of)
 Megalomartyr Saints
 Melismas *see* Music (Sacred)
 Men, Alexander (1935–1990)
Menaion
 Mesonyktikon
 Metanie (Metanoia)
 Meteora
 Meyendorff, John (1926–1992)
 see Contemporary Orthodox
 Theology
 Military Saints
 Miracles
 Mission *see* Evangelism
 Moghila, Peter (1596–1646)
 Moldova, Orthodoxy in
 Monasticism
 Monophysitism (including
 Miaphysitism)
 Monothelitism
 Mother Maria Skobtsova
 (1891–1945) *see* Contemporary
 Orthodox Theology
 Mount Athos
 Music (Sacred)
 Myrobletes Saints
 Mystery (Sacrament)
 Name (Name Day)
 Nativity of the Lord

- Nativity of the Theotokos
 Nestorianism
 Neumes *see* Music (Sacred)
 New Martyrs
 Newly Revealed Saints
 Nikephoros Blemmydes (1197–1272)
 see Lyons, Council of (1274)
 Niptic Books (*Paterika*)
 Nissiotis, Nikos (1925–1986)
 see Contemporary Orthodox
 Theology; Ecumenism
 Non-Possessors (Nil Sorskii)
 Ode
Oktoechos
 Old Believers
 Old Testament
 Optina
 Ordination
 Oriental Orthodox
 Original Sin
 Orthros (Matins)
 Ottoman Yoke
 Panagia
 Panikhida *see* Death (and
 Funeral); Kollyva
 Pannychis *see* Kontakion
 Pantocrator Icon
 Papacy
 Paradise
 Paraklesis
Paraklitike
 Parousia
 Pascha *see* Calendar; Feasts
 Passion Bearers
Paterikon see Niptic Books
 (*Paterika*)
 Patristics
 Pentarchy
 Pentecost, Feast of
Pentekostarion
Penthos see Repentance
 Perichoresis
 Phelonion
Philokalia
 Philosophy
 Photogogika *see* Exaposteilarion
Pilgrim, Way of the
 Platytera
 Pneumatology *see* Holy Spirit
Pokrov see Protecting Veil
 Poland, Orthodox Church of
 Pontike, Evagrius (ca. 345–399)
 Possessors (Joseph of Volotsk)
 Prayer
 Prayer of the Heart *see* Jesus
 Prayer; St. Isaac the Syrian (7th c.);
 St. Paisy Velichovsky (1722–1794)
 Priesthood
 Proimion *see* Kontakion
 Prokeimenon
 Proskomedie (Prothesis)
 Prosomoia *see* Idiomelon
 Prosphora *see* Lance;
 Proskomedie (Prothesis)
 Protecting Veil
 Prothesis *see* Proskomedie
 Protodeacon
 Protopsaltes *see* Music (Sacred)
 Psaltes (Cantor)
 Psilanthropism
 Psychosabbaton
 Quinisext Council (Council
 in Trullo) (692)
 Relics
 Repentance
 Resurrection
 Rhipidion (Fan)
 Romania, Patriarchal Orthodox
 Church of
 Rome, Ancient Patriarchate of
 Royal Doors
 Russia, Patriarchal Orthodox
 Church of
 St. Alexis Toth *see* United States
 of America, Orthodoxy in the
 St. Andrei Rublev (ca. 1360–1430)
 St. Antony of Egypt (the Great)
 (ca. 251–356)
 St. Athanasius of Alexandria
 (ca. 293–373)

- St. Augustine of Hippo
(354–430)
- St. Basil of Caesarea
(Basil the Great) (330–379)
- St. Constantine the Emperor
(ca. 271–337)
- St. Cyril of Alexandria
(ca. 378–444)
- St. Dionysius the Areopagite
- St. Dorotheos of Gaza (6th c.)
- St. Elizaveta Feodorovna
(1864–1918)
- St. Ephrem the Syrian
(ca. 306–373/379)
- St. Feofan *see* Theophan the
Greek (ca. 1340–1410)
- St. Filaret (Philaret) Drozdov
(1782–1867)
- St. Gregory the Great, Pope
(ca. 540–604)
- St. Gregory of Nazianzus
(Gregory the Theologian)
(329–390)
- St. Gregory Palamas (1296–1359)
- St. Herman of Alaska *see* Finland,
Autonomous Orthodox Church of;
United States of America,
Orthodoxy in the
- St. Ignatius Brianchaninov
(1807–1867)
- St. Innocent of Alaska *see*
United States of America,
Orthodoxy in the
- St. Isaac the Syrian (7th c.)
- St. John Cassian
(ca. 360–ca. 435)
- St. John Chrysostom (349–407)
- St. John of Damascus
(ca. 675–ca. 750)
- St. John Klimakos
(ca. 579–ca. 659)
- St. Macarius (4th c.)
- St. Mark of Ephesus (1392–1445)
- St. Maximos the Confessor
(580–662)
- St. Nicholas Cabasilas
(ca. 1322–ca. 1391)
- St. Nicholas the Wonderworker
- St. Nikodemos the Hagiorite
(1749–1809)
- St. Paisy Velichovsky (1722–1794)
- St. Photios the Great
(ca. 810–ca. 893)
- St. Romanos the Melodist (6th c.)
- St. Seraphim of Sarov
(1759–1833)
- St. Sergius of Radonezh
(1314–1392)
- St. Silouan of Athos (1866–1938)
- St. Symeon the New Theologian
(949–1022)
- St. Theodore the Studite
(759–826)
- St. Theophan (Govorov)
the Recluse (1815–1894)
- St. Tikhon (Belavin) (1865–1925)
- St. Tikhon of Zadonsk
(1724–1783)
- Sts. Barsanuphius and
John (6th c.)
- Sts. Constantine (Cyril)
(ca. 826–869) and Methodios
(815–885)
- Schmemmann, Alexander
(1921–1983) *see* Contemporary
Orthodox Theology
- Scholarios, George (Gennadios)
(ca. 1403–1472)
- Semandron
- Serbia, Patriarchal Orthodox
Church of
- Sexual Ethics
- Sin *see* Original Sin; Soteriology
- Sinai, Autocephalous Church of
- Skoupho *see* Kalymauchion
- Solovyov, Vladimir (1853–1900)
- Sophiology
- Sophrony, Archimandrite
(1896–1993)
- Soteriology

- Stăniloae, Dumitru (1903–1993)
Starets *see* Elder (Starets)
Stavrophore
Stethatos, Niketas
(ca. 1005–1085)
Sticharion
Sticheron
Stylite Saints
Subdeacon *see* Ordination
Syrian Orthodox Churches
Teretismata *see* Music (Sacred)
Theophan the Greek
(ca. 1340–1410)
Theophany, Feast of
Theophylact of Ohrid
(ca. 1050–1108)
Theotokion
Theotokos, the Blessed Virgin
Tradition
Triodion
- Troparion
Tropes *see* Music (Sacred)
Ukraine, Orthodoxy in the
Uniate *see* Eastern Catholic
Churches
United States of America,
Orthodoxy in the
Unmercenary Saints
Vespers (Hesperinos)
Vestments
Virgins
War
Wealth
Western Europe, Orthodoxy in
Widows
Women in Orthodoxy
World Religions, Orthodoxy and
Yannaras, Christos (b. 1935)
see Contemporary Orthodox
Theology

ILLUSTRATIONS

Plate 1	Ethiopian Orthodox clergy celebrating at the rock-carved church of St. George Lalibela	1
Plate 2	Pilgrims gathered around the Ethiopian Orthodox Church of Holy Emmanuel	2
Plate 3	Orthodox clergy at celebrations for the Feast of the Ark of the Covenant (Timkat)	3
Plate 4	St. Matthew the Evangelist	40
Plate 5	Holy Trinity Church, Sergiev Posad	44
Plate 6	Interior of St. Catherine's Monastery, 19th-century print, the Basilica of the Transfiguration	44
Plate 7	An Ethiopian hermit cave-dweller and his two deacon assistants	54
Plate 8	Baptism of a baby	66
Plate 9	Russian priest monk blessing Paschal kulich cake	74
Plate 10	Contemporary icon of Christ Philanthropos	118
Plate 11	The Monastery of the Holy Trinity, Sergiev Posad	125
Plate 12	The Orthodox confession service	135
Plate 13	Coptic fresco of Christ in glory from the Monastery of St. Antony by the Red Sea	147
Plate 14	Orthodox pilgrim in Jerusalem venerating the icon of the cross held by a monk	169
Plate 15	Deacon wearing vestments of his order with the diagonally placed stole and carrying the bishop's blessing candle (Dikeri)	177
Plate 16	Russian Orthodox funeral	181
Plate 17	Monastery of St. Antony in Egypt	188
Plate 18	Father Pavlos, the spiritual Elder (Starets) of the Sinai monastic community	219
Plate 19	Icon of the Virgin Mary, Mother of God of Tenderness (Eleousa)	220
Plate 20	Ukrainian bishop giving the blessing at the divine liturgy with the Dikeri and Trikeri candlesticks, standing in front of the iconostasis	222
Plate 21	Priest blessing Paschal foods	224
Plate 22	Russian bishop blessing the Kollyva memorial dishes at the liturgical commemoration of the dead	249
Plate 23	Vasily Grigorevich Perov (1834–1882), <i>Easter Procession in the Country</i>	250
Plate 24	Emperor John VIII Palaeologos depicted as one of the Magi by Benozzo Gozzoli (1420–1497)	255
Plate 25	Mikhail Vasilievich Nesterov (1862–1942), <i>The Philosophers</i> (Pavel Florensky and Sergius Bulgakov)	257
Plate 26	The Cathedral of St. Basil, Red Square, Moscow	261

Plate 27	Monastic cells of the monks at the Sinaya Monastery, Romania	300
Plate 28	A hermitage in the complex of buildings at the Romanian women's monastery at Varatec	300
Plate 29	Fresco of the Virgin Mary from the Monastery Church of St. Antony, Egypt	307
Plate 30	Contemporary icon of the Divine Trinity (after Rublev)	311
Plate 31	An Orthodox church cantor	322
Plate 32	Nun painting an icon	327
Plate 33	Part of the newly restored gallery of priceless icons preserved at St. Catherine's Monastery, Mount Sinai, Egypt	328
Plate 34	An icon-screen of an Orthodox church (iconostasis)	330
Plate 35	Russian Orthodox icon of the Virgin Mary, Theotokos, or Mother of God	331
Plate 36	Pilgrim carrying Orthodox cross	349
Plate 37	One of the nuns in the Varatec monastic community in Romania	353
Plate 38	The western outside wall of the 16th-century church at Voronets, Romania, depicting the Doomsday	358
Plate 39	Orthodox monk wearing the kamilavki (hat) sounding the monastic tantalon (bell for service) with the semandron (wooden hammer beam) in the corner	361
Plate 40	Orthodox wedding ritual	380
Plate 41	St. Peter Moghila	389
Plate 42	Romanian nun carrying basket of Paschal painted eggs	392
Plate 43	Romanian monastery of Simbata de Sus	392
Plate 44	Liturgical procession at Optina Hermitage	424
Plate 45	Optina Hermitage recently restored	424
Plate 46	A Coptic monk in the Monastery of St. Antony, Egypt	427
Plate 47	Pope Shenouda, leader of the world's Coptic Orthodox faithful	427
Plate 48	Coptic fresco of Christ in glory from the Monastery of St. Antony by the Red Sea	433
Plate 49	Orthodox priest wearing the phelonion vestment and the pectoral cross (stavrophore)	445
Plate 50	The medieval pilgrim's entrance gate to the Monastery of the Holy Trinity at Sergiev Posad, near Moscow	450
Plate 51	Icon of the Protecting Veil depicting the Holy Fool Andrew	460
Plate 52	Bishop in the Monastery of St. John on Patmos, Greece, talking to two monks	461
Plate 53	Exhuming relics of the saints at Optina Hermitage	466
Plate 54	A reliquary containing the remains of several saints	466
Plate 55	Icon of the myrrh-bearing women at the tomb	470
Plate 56	The monastic cells (living quarters) of Rohia Monastery in Northern Romania	472
Plate 57	The seminarians' chapel of Sergiev Posad Academy, near Moscow	493
Plate 58	The Danilovsky Monastery, Moscow	494
Plate 59	Patriarch Kiril, head of the Russian Orthodox Church	494

Plate 60	The Monastery of the Holy Trinity, Sergiev Posad, one of the homes of the Moscow Patriarch	495
Plate 61	Icon of St. Antony of Egypt, father of monks	508
Plate 62	The tiny cave where St. Antony of Egypt spent forty years in solitary prayer, now a shrine many hundreds of feet above the monastery dedicated to his name by the Red Sea in Egypt	509
Plate 63	Contemporary icon of St. Cyril of Alexandria	518
Plate 64	Portrait of St. Elizaveta Feodorovna as Princess “Ella” before her widowhood and monastic profession	522
Plate 65	Icon of St. Nicholas, 10th century, from the Monastery of St. Catherine, Mount Sinai, Egypt	541
Plate 66	Domes of the Kiev Pechersky Lavra	543
Plate 67	St. Seraphim of Sarov	547
Plate 68	Icon of St. Sergius of Radonezh	548
Plate 69	Portrait of St. Tikhon (Belavin)	554
Plate 70	The fortified monastery of St. Catherine at Sinai, built by Emperor Justinian in the 6th century	573
Plate 71	Once the only way into the Sinai monastery was to be wound up in a wicker basket on a rope, into the entrance high up in the wall	574
Plate 72	Ukrainian folk group celebrating the feast of the Theophany	593
Plate 73	Mother of Tenderness	595
Plate 74	The Kiev Mohyla Academy, founded by the great Ukrainian hierarch Peter Moghila	605
Plate 75	St. Jonah’s skete in midtown Kiev	606
Plate 76	An Orthodox bishop wearing the mantya robe and carrying the episcopal staff (rabydos) presides over the Vespers service	621
Plate 77	A convent workshop in Romania	623
Plate 78	Romanian nun of the community of Voronets engaged in making candles	624
Plate 79	A nun of the Romanian community of Voronets outside the famous “painted church”	636

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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 Ceaușescu 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) Konstantinovsky, 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.

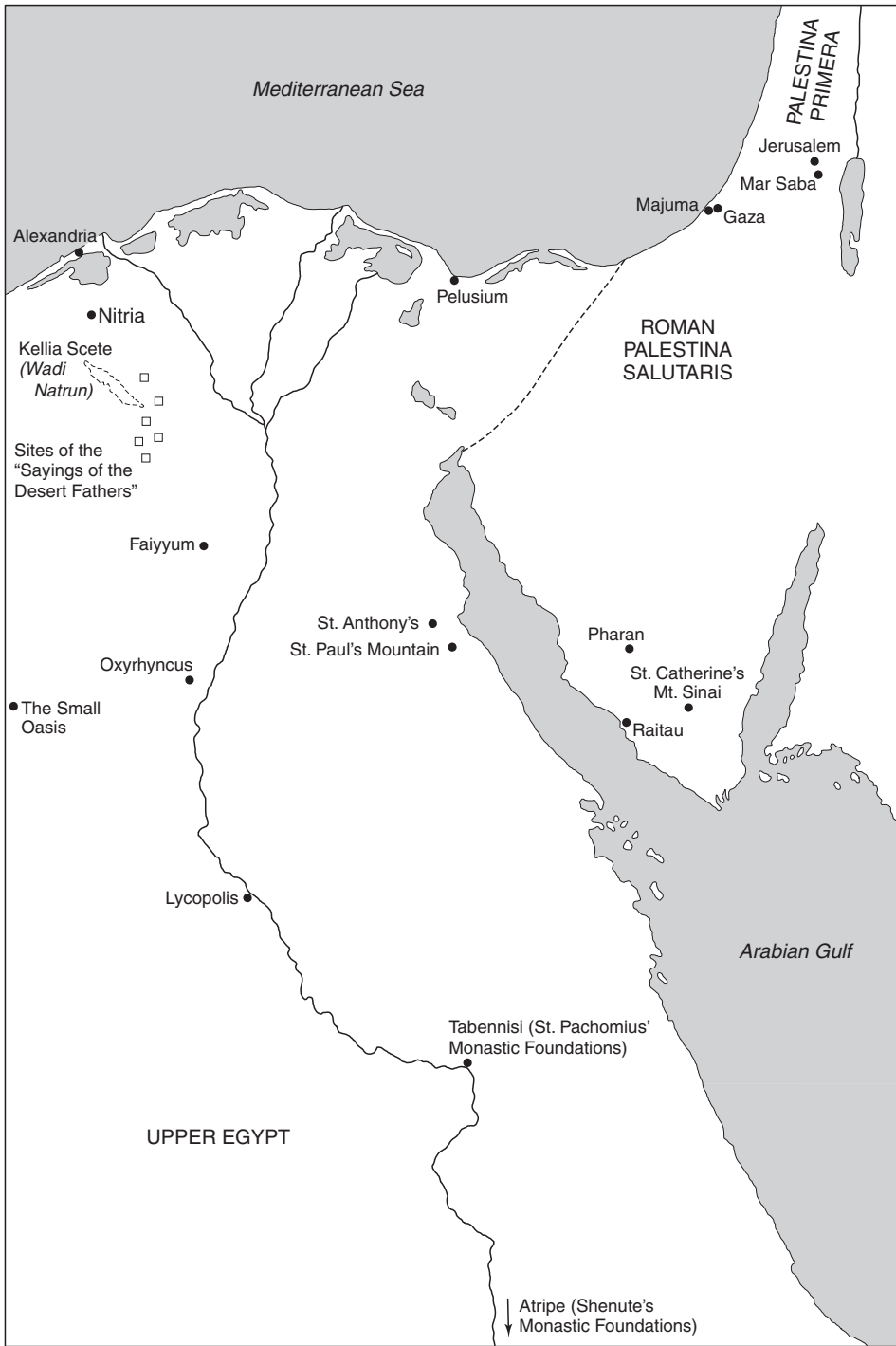
V. Revd. Prof. John A. McGuckin
 Priest of the Romanian Orthodox Church
 Feast of the Learned Hierarch St. Grigorie
 Dascalui,
 Metropolitan of the Romanians

MAPS

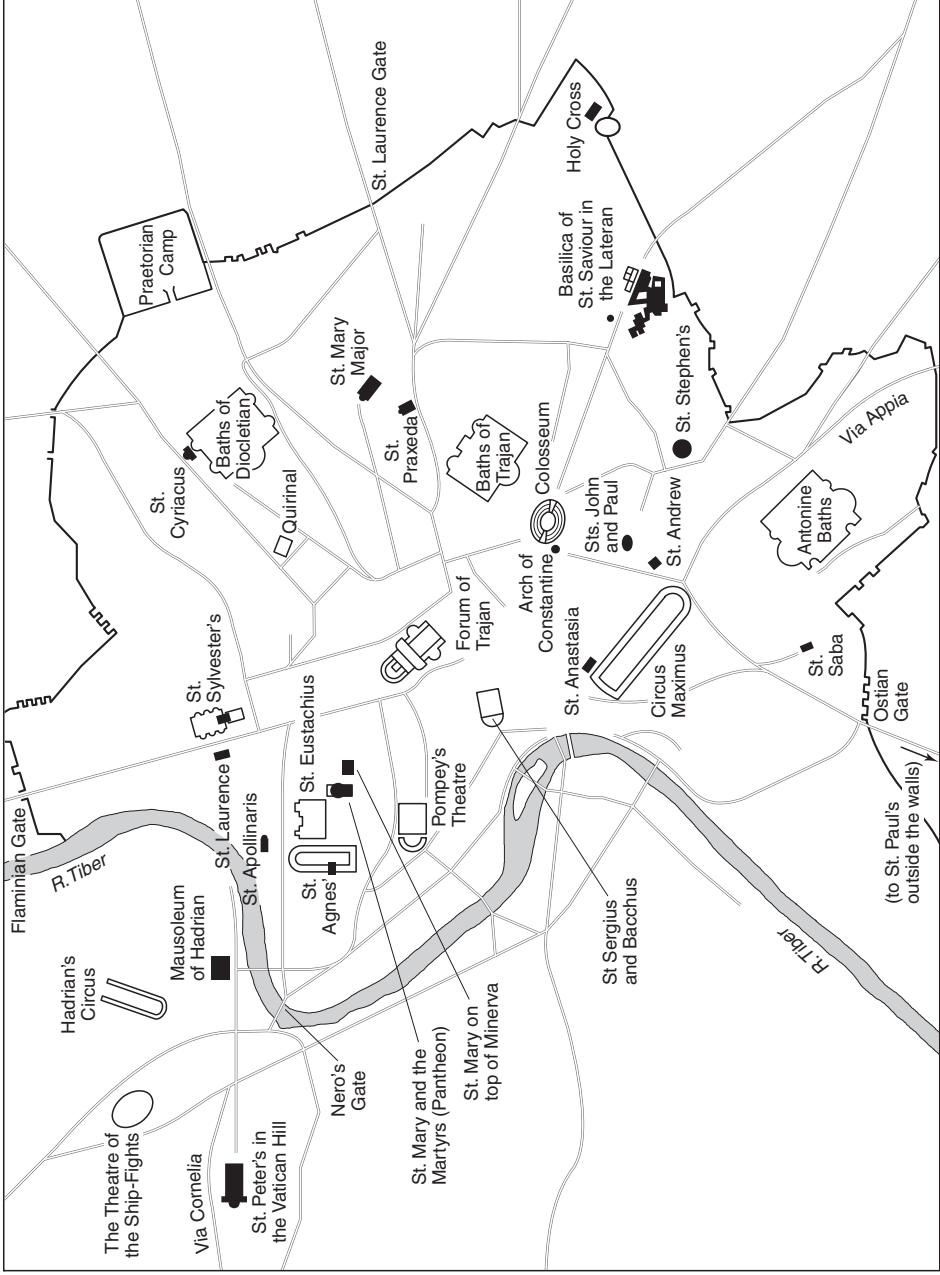
Map 1	The Early Christian world	xxv
Map 2	Early Christian Egypt	xxvi
Map 3	Early Christian Rome	xxvii
Map 4	Constantinople	xxviii



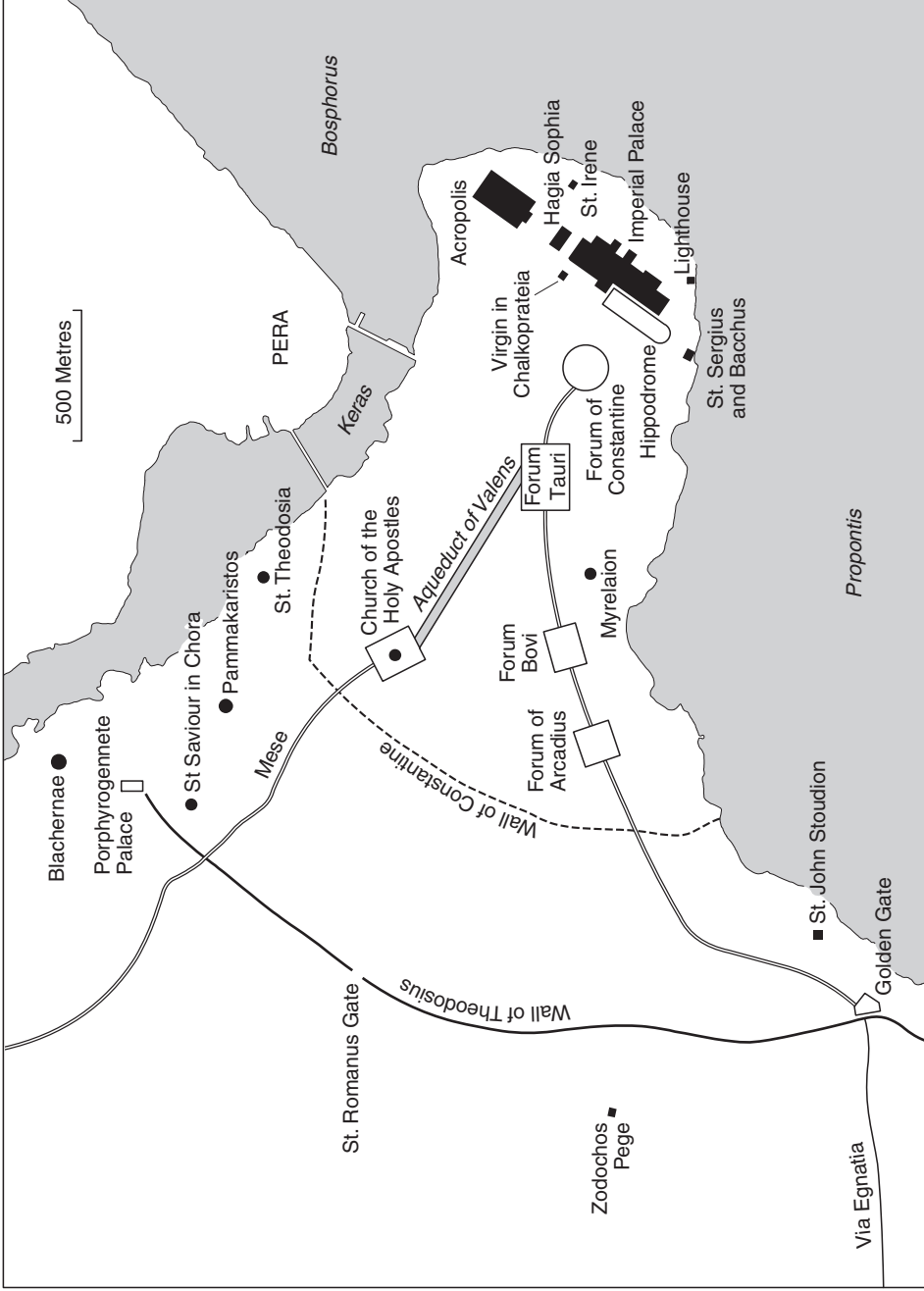
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Map 4 Constantinople.