

Review: Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, Penguin Books, Middlesex, England, 1963 (1982 edn.)

Pages: 352

The Other Leg of Rome

A detailed survey theologically, historically, and culturally of a large but surprisingly obscured religion in the West, compared to Roman Catholicism.

Biblically, the Orthodox Church (OC) *is* Rome, thus Constantinople was founded in AD 330 as “New Rome”, and to this day, “It is the Roman Catholics with whom Orthodoxy has by far the most in common” [p321]. Since there is always some power struggle in the kingdom of darkness (e.g. the Avignon Papacy), the Great Schism resulting from Rome’s innovative *fillioque*, and its Papal primacy dogma, is simply the same struggle writ large.

However, theologically there is little difference between the two Romes: both believe they cannibalise Jesus at communion, both ‘worship’ Mary, and both believe in a gospel of works via the sacraments, and salvation is never assured.

Like Catholicism, Orthodoxy *per se* is built on itself, claiming Tradition as final authority, which means a whole raft of things, the Bible being just one. The strongest pillar of this authority is said to be the Seven Councils, and since decrees are proposed and agreed to *by the OC*, its authority is ultimately grounded in *itself alone, not God*.

Historically, the author clearly traces Orthodoxy’s transfer from a defeated Byzantine into Russia and Moscow as the ‘Third Rome’. He also highlights persecution under the militant Atheist Soviet regime.

Introduction (pp. 1-16)

Khomiakov call the Pope ‘the first Protestant’.

The Greeks were driven west by Islam.

Persia had a Nestorian church, and five Monophysite churches were in Armenia, Syria, Egypt (Copts) and India.

Moscow was said to replace Byzantine in 1453 when it fell.

The four ancient patriarchates were: Constantinople (3M); Alexandria (250K); Antioch (450K); and Jerusalem (60K). Adding Rome makes the Pentarchy.

The OC is a family of self-governing Churches.

‘Orthodoxy’ has a double meaning of both right *belief* and *worship*.

I) The Beginnings (pp. 19-25)

Ignatius called the Eucharist ‘the medicine of immortality’.

There are three kinds of martyrdom in orthodoxy: white (abandoning all for God); green (fasting and labour); and red (death for Christ).

II) Byzantium I: The Church of the Seven Councils (pp. 26-50)

New Rome was inaugurated AD330 with the command no pagan rites should be performed in it.

The Edict of Milan (312), founding of Constantinople (330), and Council of Nicaea (325) are said to be three pillars of Orthodoxy.

Councils defined for all time OC teaching on fundamental doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation. They merely draw ‘a fence’ around these mysteries.

John 17.22-3 is the OC basis for their doctrine of θεοσις.

Either Christ was made less than God (Arianism), his manhood divided as a separate person (Nestorianism), or not truly present as man (Monophysitism).

Arius, an Alexandrian priest, was condemned at Nicaea. Constantinople was granted the honour after Rome because it was New Rome.

Ὁμοουσιος is “one essence”.

The Cappodocian Fathers (Gregory of Nazianus, Basil the Great, and Gregory of Nyssa) emphasised God’s three persons (ὑποστάσεις) in one essence. John Chrysostom [Golden mouth] (344-407) also has great standing.

Nestorius denied Mary was ‘Mother of God’, rather, she was only ‘Mother of Man’ since she is mother of Christ’s humanity, not His divinity.

The Cyprian church was granted independence at the Council of Ephesus.

Orthodoxy grants Rome primacy of *honour*, not *supremacy* (‘first among equals’). Rome’s mistake was to turn this primacy or ‘presidency of love’ into a supremacy of external power ... its origin from being where Peter and Paul were martyred.

The OC struggled with icons in the 8-9thC; in 726 Leo III attacked them but in 780 Empress Irene defended them. In 815, Leo V attacked them, but in 843 Empress Theodora had them reinstated permanently (the ‘Triumph of Orthodoxy’, celebrated on ‘Orthodox Sunday’ in the first week of Lent). Anathemas are now pronounced on all who attack ‘Holy Icons’ or the Seven General Councils. Thus, the OC calls itself the, ‘Church of the Seven Councils’.

“Orthodox prostrates himself before ... icons, he kisses them and burns candles in front of them; they are censed by the priest and carried in procession ... because icons are only symbols, Orthodox do not *worship* them, but *reverence* or *venerate* them.” [p40]

Monasticism came out of Egypt in the 4thC with hermits living in huts or caves. Since the 10thC, the chief centre of OC monasticism has been Athos, the ‘Holy Mountain’.

The Orthodox Emperor was said to be an icon of the monarchy of God in heaven.

III) Byzantium II: The Great Schism (pp. 51-81)

Papal claims and Rome's *fillioque* innovation are the two main reasons for the schism. The rise of Islam cutting off Mediterranean communication, and creation of the Holy Roman Empire also contributed. By 450, few in the West could read Greek, and by 600, 'New Rome' didn't speak Latin.

Nicetas, Archbishop of Nicomedia, 12thC: "If the Roman Pontiff, seated on the lofty throne of his glory, wishes to thunder at us and, ... hurl his mandates at us from on high ... to judge us and even to rule us and our Churches, not, by taking counsel with us but at his own arbitrary pleasure, what kind of brotherhood, or even what kind of parenthood can this be? We should then be slaves ... and the Roman See would not be the pious mother of sons but a hard and imperious mistress of slaves." [p58]

In 865, Pope Nicholas I claimed he is endowed with authority 'over all the earth'.

Diptychs are Papal lists.

The OC uses leaven in their communion bread.

In 1204, Rome sacked Constantinople over three days.

The Byzantine Empire found itself increasingly weakened by Turkish Muslims on its eastern front. Its only hope was aid from the West, so 'accepted' the *Fillioque* and Purgatory. Yet Duke Lucas Notaras said: "I would rather see the Moslem turban in the midst of the city than the Latin mitre." [p81]

On 4/7/1453, the Turks took Byzantium after a seven-week siege, outnumbering them 20:1. The Emperor died fighting on the walls.

IV) The Conversion of the Slavs (pp. 82-95)

Cyril and Methodius evangelised the Caucus, but not the Khazars who adopted Judaism. Cyril died at Rome in 869.

The attempt to found a Slavonic church in Moravia came to nought.

The OC has never been rigid in language usage.
Bulgaria was the first national Church of the Slavs.

The Russians used to worship Perun who had a silver head and golden moustache.

From 1237-1448 Mongol Tartars rules Russia, but were made impotent after the battle of Kulikovo.

1350-1550 was the 'golden age' of Russian spirituality.

V) The Church Under Islam (pp. 96-111)

Lutherans and Orthodox cordially met in the "Tubingen interlude" in the Ukraine ("Little Russia").

Poland and Lithuania were united from 1386. Jesuits arrived in Poland in 1564 and began to pressure the Orthodox. In 1596, Brest-Litovsk was held to proclaim union with Rome, but eventually fell through with the mutual excommunications.

"The Jesuits began by using deceit, and ended by resorting to violence. Doubtless they were sincere men ... but the tactics which they employed ... embittered relations between Orthodoxy and Rome ... until the present day ... small wonder that Orthodox ... should prefer Mohammedan to Roman Catholic rulers." [p105]

Non-Jurors were Anglicans who separated from the CoE in 1688 rather than swear allegiance to William of Orange. They sought communion with the OC, but couldn't accept the Real Presence, nor veneration of Mary as 'Mother of God', icons or the saints.

VI) Moscow and St Petersburg (pp. 112-138)

The Russian church became autocephalous after 1453.

In 1472, Ivan III married Sophia, niece of the last Byzantine Emperor. Moscow was now Third Rome and adopted the double-headed eagle of Byzantium as its emblem, with the ruler titled 'Tsar'.

Archpriest Avvakum (1620-82) each evening would recite 600 Jesus prayers, 100 to Mary, and do 300 prostrations.

From 1700-1917, the Tsar abolished the Patriarchate to increase his power.

Orthodox are forbidden to become Freemasons.

VII) The Twentieth Century, I: Greeks and Arabs (pp. 139-151)

The Greeks lost a disastrous war with Turkey in 1922.

Monasticism is viewed today with indifference and contempt.

The Church of Sinai is a 'freak' in Orthodoxy, just one monastery, St. Catherine's.

VIII) The Twentieth Century, II: Orthodoxy and the Militant Atheists (pp. 152-179)

Stalin: "The Party cannot be neutral towards religion."

F. N. Oleschuk, former Secretary of the League of Militant Atheists, Uchitelskaya Gazeta, 26 November 1949:

"A Soviet teacher must be guided by the principles of the Party spirit of science; he is obliged ... to be an unbeliever himself ... to be an active propagandist of Godlessness among others, to be the bearer of the ideas of militant proletarian atheism ... the Soviet teacher must expose and overcome religious prejudices ... in school and outside school, day in and day out." [p153]

In 1918, Stalin closed all seminaries and academies, and confiscated all Church properties and lands. All Christians were classed as, "counter-revolutionaries". Furthermore, the Church was pledged to *actively* support communist policies and propaganda.

Orthodox hierarchs began to lie saying there were never any religious persecution in Russia under Soviet power. When the Germans invaded, many welcomed them as liberators.

Priests had to be licensed, which included an oath of loyalty to the government.

Congregations in the U.S.S.R. included more women and older people.

IX) The Twentieth Century, III: Diaspora and Mission (pp. 180-199)

In 1922, Greece created an Exarchate in London.

Orthodoxy is attractive to Ugandans as it is free of colonial baggage.

X) Holy Tradition: The Source of the Orthodox Faith (pp. 200-215)

OC 'tradition' means: the Bible, the Creed, Councils, Church Fathers, service books, and icons.

"It is from the Church that the Bible ultimately derives its authority."

The Bible is said to be a verbal icon of Christ and therefore is venerated.

"All true Orthodox theology is mystical".

XI) God and Man (pp. 216-242)

The Father is Αρχε , the Son born of the Father from all eternity, and the Spirit proceeds from the Father from all eternity.

The Roman i attacks the Godhead since the Spirit proceeds from both Father and Son.

Sabellius taught God appears in different modes as Father, Son, or Spirit.

John Chrysostom: "[God] wishes all men to be saved, but forces no one."

The OC doesn't believe in Original Sin, that unbaptised babies go to hell, therefore, have no belief in 'Limbo'.

XII) The Church and God (pp. 243-268)

The OC denies any ‘invisible’ church since it is claimed to be the ‘One True Church’ (i).

The OC derives its infallibility from the Seven Councils.

XIII) Orthodox Worship I: The Earthly Heaven (pp. 269-280)

XIV) Orthodox Worship II: The Sacraments (pp. 281-303)

Sacraments are called ‘mysteries’ in the OC.

Transubstantiation: “At the moment of consecration in the Mass there is a change of substance, but the accidents continue to exist as before ... bread and wine are changed into ... Body and Blood of Christ, but the ... bread and wine ... continue miraculously to exist and to be perceptible to the senses.” [p291]

“The Eucharist is a sacrifice ... Christ himself ... not a mere figure or symbol ... but the very Body of Christ ... The events of Christ’s sacrifice ... are not repeated ... All the holy suppers of the Church are nothing else than one eternal and unique Supper.” [p293-4]

Communion is given to the laity is a spoon as bread with some wine mixed. There is a strict fast beforehand. After, the people come to kiss a Cross and receive a small piece of bread, the *αντιδορον*.

A 6-7 year-old Orthodox child may receive the Repentance sacrament.

Archimandrite: monk supervisor over several monasteries.

Higumenos: monastery Abbot.

Archpriest: honoured priest.

Hieromonk: priest-monk.

Archdeacon: monastic deacon.

Protodeacon: deacons alone.

XV) Orthodox Worship III: Feasts, Fasts, and Private Prayer (pp. 304-314)

XVI) The Orthodox Church and the Reunion of Christians (pp. 315-334)

There are about 50,000 Nestorians.

“It is the Roman Catholics with whom Orthodoxy has by far the most in common.” [p321]