

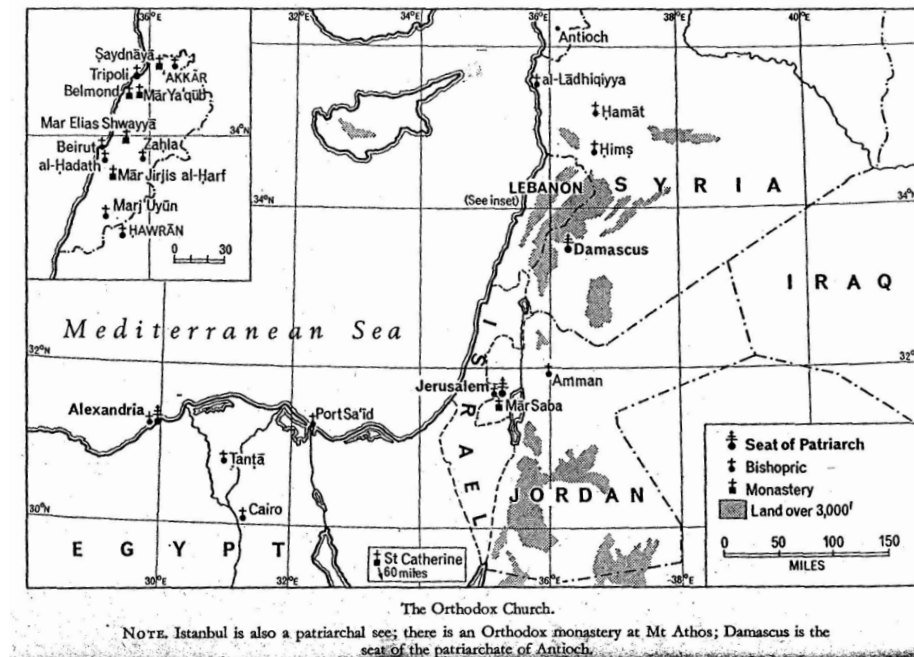
# THE ORTHODOX CHURCH

AN ESSAY BY  
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Chapter from “Religion in the Middle East, Three Religions in Concord and Conflict”

The following is an essay written by Charles Malik that was published in the book *Religion in the Middle East*, Vol. I, Chapter 6 by Cambridge at the University Press, 1969.

By the Orthodox Church in the Middle East is meant the four ancient patriarchates of Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem. These are autocephalous churches, each independent and self-governing. The independence is only administrative; there is no visible head over them all ordering their affairs as in the Roman Catholic Church; and the pre-eminence given among them, as indeed among all Orthodox churches (Russian, Greek, Serbian, etc.), to the ecumenical patriarch of Constantinople is only one of honour and not of authority, each patriarch having his own metropolitans and bishops and his own holy synod. But in doctrine and in liturgy they are not independent: they all go back in doctrine to the Greek Fathers and to the original seven Ecumenical Councils of the Church, and they all have the same liturgy of Saint Basil the Great and Saint John Chrysostom. Their unity is not one of rule; it is the identity of their patristic roots, their tradition, their faith and their liturgy. Thus they are the preservers and continuers of the glorious religious tradition of Byzantium in the Middle East. They should therefore be distinguished, on the one hand, from the non-Byzantine and non-Catholic churches of the Middle East (the Coptic church, the Syriac church, the Armenian “Orthodox” church, etc.) which were excommunicated by the early Ecumenical Councils of the Church Universal, and, on the other, from the Roman Catholic Church with which they were in communion and with which they formed one Universal Church up until the tragic events which culminated in the separation of East from West and West from East in 1054. Orthodoxy in the Middle East is what is left of the original native Church of the Orient which was in communion with the Church of the Occident for a thousand years. It is what has survived from the original Greek branch of the Church Universal after thirteen centuries of Muslim-Arab and Muslim-Ottoman conquest and domination in the Middle East. We should probably use the phrase “Greek Orthodox Church” to distinguish this original Church of the Orient from other churches, such as the Coptic and Armenian, which also use the term “Orthodox”, but in the plan of this work the term “Orthodox Church” is clearly intended to signify only the Church of which we here speak.



The inner life of Orthodoxy in the Middle East, both as a corporate church and as individual believers, is known in its fullness only to God. In that great and final Day when Christ shall judge all men, those who will be asked to “inherit the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world” should not be surprised if they should find there a few Orthodox from the Middle East. There has been suffering for His name, there has been faithfulness to His word, there has been intense devotion to His mother, there has been the sweetest piety from love for and attachment to His person—all this could produce some merit which, in His mercy, could count for righteousness in His eyes.

But it is the outer life of Orthodoxy in the Middle East during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that can be clearly delineated in its broad outline. The Orthodox lived under concrete historical-social-political conditions to which they had to adjust and within which they realized whatever human and spiritual existence they could muster and conserve. While these “external conditions” doubtless determine the life of the spirit, they determine it only “externally”: certainly it is not determined by them alone. In defiance of all “external” determination, there is always an independent determination rooted in the freedom of the spirit itself and ultimately in its ground in God. But the external determinants, such as they are, are real and important and should be carefully noted. They are seven: (1) relations to Islam in its Ottoman and Arab forms; (2) relations to Russian Orthodoxy and the Russian State, both tsarist and soviet; (3) relations to Rome and Roman Catholicism; (4) relations to Protestantism, European and American; (5) relations to the Western powers, principally France, Britain and the United States; (6) friction and conflict among the four sees; and (7)

the problem of the relations between the Greek clergy and the faithful natives. Orthodox in the Middle East has been struggling for its existence, living its life, and realizing its being, under the banner of these seven concrete circumstances, combining and interlacing among themselves into a bewildering variety of patterns.

Orthodoxy in the Middle East has been living ever since the fall of Constantinople in 1453 in a predominantly Muslim world. The Muslim spirit encompasses it. It is free only within this spirit. Except for the extensive Greek colonies in the Ottoman Empire and until recently in Egypt, the Orthodox of the Middle East belong almost wholly to the native populations of these lands. In the sees of Antioch and Jerusalem (apart from the Greek hierarchy in the latter), and among the remaining non-Greeks in the see of Alexandria, the faithful are all Arabic-speaking. The Orthodox are keenly conscious of their existential status as a Christian minority group in a vast Muslim sea, although in Lebanon this sense, so far as Lebanon thinks only of itself, namely, so far as Lebanon is independent from the rest of the Middle East, is considerably mitigated by the knowledge that they belong to a total body politic which is itself a community of minorities, some of which indeed are themselves Muslim.

Under the Ottoman Turks the Orthodox became part of the Muslim *dhimma* system. According to this system there is a distinction between Muslim and non-Muslim subjects; the former, constituting the *umma* (i.e. the nation) of Islam, enjoy privileges which the latter, being only *dhimma* (i.e. held under or protected by the dictates of the conscience of Islam, which includes the legal and political status allowed them by the Qur'ān), are not entitled to enjoy. They were thus distinctly second-class citizens. As *dhimma*, the Christians have their own religious, social and political status whereby they may practice their own religion "freely," but they cannot seek or accept the conversion of Muslims to Christianity, they cannot serve in the armed forces, they cannot hold high governmental office, their men cannot marry Muslim women, and they must pay special tribute to their Muslim rulers. If you wanted to remain Christian, you had to submit to this system. That is why the predominantly Christian Near East became with the passage of time predominantly Muslim.

Mehmed the Conqueror into whose hands Constantinople fell, saw to it that the new ecumenical patriarch belonged to the anti-Rome party. In recognizing him, the Sultan addressed him as follows: "Be patriarch; may God keep thee; I grant thee my favour and support; and thou shalt enjoy all the rights practised by thy predecessors." An imperial edict was later issued guaranteeing the person and freedom of the patriarch, exempting him from all taxes, safeguarding his security in his throne, assuring the transmission of his prerogatives to his successors, recognizing his jurisdiction over all the prelates under him, and granting him some temporal authority. The precedence of honour accorded the ecumenical patriarch among the four patriarchs of the Orient ever since the fifth century was continued and formalized by the new regime.

The Orthodox had considerable though not unchequered influence in Constantinople under the Ottoman Turks. Often the Sultan would issue edicts or fermans in their favour against Catholic missions from the West. Thus in 1725 two such edicts were promulgated whereby Western missionaries were forbidden to enter the homes of the Christian subjects of the Sultan. And in 1774, a most important treaty (confirmed in later treaties) was concluded between Russia and the Ottomans, from which Russia emerged as a sort of protector of the Christians of the Ottoman Empire. In this treaty, the Sublime Porte pledged permanent protection to the Christian religion and the Christian churches, assured Russia that the Christian subjects of the Sultan would live under a just government and would enjoy religious freedom, and recognized Russia's right to make complaints about the rights of these subjects whenever she deemed that necessary.

The ecumenical patriarch was for centuries recognized by the Sultan as the ultimate Christian authority in the empire. But when large numbers both of Orthodox and Armenians established communion with Rome, a conflict of allegiance arose in their mind as between patriarch and pope. The Christians quarrelled bitterly among themselves, and often the sultan had to assume the role of umpire. Thus in 1828 Mahmud II abrogated any authority that the ecumenical patriarch may have had over the Armenian Catholics and appointed a Muslim overseer to look after their temporal problems, reserving their spiritual affairs to the care of the Apostolic Nuncio himself; and in 1831 this same Sultan recognized in an imperial edict an Armenian bishop as the head of the Armenian Catholic *millet*, and authorized all Catholics, Armenian, Maronite and Greek, to regard him as their ultimate court of appeal, alike in spiritual matters and in those temporal transactions in which he could mediate between them and the Porte. It was thus by an edict of the Ottoman Sultan, the Caliph of the Muslims, that the uniate church of the Armenians and Greeks was formally legally established in the Middle East.

The treaties between Russia and the Porte concerning the Orthodox subjects of the Sultan signify that Orthodoxy was not dead in the Ottoman world (Greece and the Balkans were then under Ottoman rule) and that it had co-religionists in the realms beyond who were interested in it and who were prepared to "protect" it whatever their ultimate motives may have been. But when feelings run very high, the binding character of these treaties is usually set aside. Such was the case in 1821 when, upon the outbreak of the Greek revolution in which both Russia and Britain played competing and counteracting parts, the Turks seized the ecumenical patriarch, Gregory V, while he was celebrating the Easter Divine Liturgy and dragged him from inside the church to the gate of the churchyard, where they hanged him in his ecclesiastical vestments. We have here a dramatic illustration of the precarious worldly conditions under which Orthodoxy lived.

In theory the Church under the Ottomans was free to elect its own patriarchs according to its own laws and procedures, but the electing bodies (bishops and laymen) had to submit candidates to the authorities from among whom the Porte could eliminate whomever it considered unacceptable. The electing bodies would then choose one from those allowed by the government, but even this choice required the further endorsement of the Porte. Only after a *berat* is issued confirming a patriarch does his election become legal. Thus the Ottoman authorities could, and often did, intervene at four levels: among the electing bodies prior to the submission of names of candidates, at the point of eliminating some of these candidates and allowing only some of them, at the time when the electing bodies make their final choice, and when the decision is made confirming the person elected.

The Eastern Question is a phrase expressing the jealousies and rivalries of the European powers with respect to the Ottoman Empire. Adjustments were successively worked out among themselves and with Constantinople. Because of chronic instability, a sort of power vacuum was created in the empire, into which the other nations rushed; and as they entered, they clashed. The Christian subjects of the Sultan were often the excuse, whether pretended or real. After the Crimean War, the pattern of adjustment arrived at in the Treaty of Paris of 1856 established a policy of non-intervention in the internal affairs of the Ottoman state, and required that no unilateral action be taken by any of the Christian powers with respect to the solution of any problems that might arise between them and the Sultan. To remove the possibility of using his Christian subjects as a pretext for intervention on the part of the powers, the Sultan issued an imperial edict, *khatt-i hümayun*, appended to the Treaty of Paris, in which he decreed equality between all his subjects, Muslim and Christian.

The examination of the character and causes of the bloody events of the sixties of the nineteenth century in Lebanon and Syria falls outside the scope of this study. There was a bewildering interpenetration and mutual determination of a maze of factors and actors: Egyptian pitted against Turk, Arab against Ottoman, French against British, European against Oriental, Maronite against Druze, Christian against Muslim, Catholic and Orthodox against Protestant, nationalist against imperialist. From the point of view of Muslim-Arab and Muslim-Turkish conditions under which Orthodoxy lived, which is the point of view of the present section of this essay, we need only note here that the outcome of this weird Levantine world of multiplicity, intrigue and clash, in which everybody was the agent or client of somebody, was the massacre of several thousand Christians, the burning of the seat and the church of the patriarch of Antioch in Damascus, and the setting up, within the Ottoman Empire, of a special autonomous regime for Lebanon guaranteed alike by the Porte and by the powers.

There are genuine elements of tolerance in Islam: the mere survival of Christian minorities under the “protection” (in the *dhimma*) of Islam may be looked upon as objective proof of that. The concrete atmosphere that prevails depends not only on the teachings of Islam, but principally on the climate of thought at the time and on the mentality of the rulers. These could conjure up tolerance and freedom or intolerance and persecution almost at will. Thus from moment to moment and mentality to mentality the *dhimma* idea could change from peaceful association and co-existence to one of persecution (spoken or unspoken) and radical intolerance. In the heat of the latter spirit, *dhimma* simply means that the Christians exist on sufferance, that so long as they continued to exist they are under the wing of Islam, that they are an alien and unassimilable element in the body politic of the *umma*. All this breeds mutual suspicion and fear. When on top of that there is in the background a whole heritage, going back to the Crusades, of political intervention by Christian powers in the name of religion, one understands how the Church could not be too prudent or too circumspect in its relations with the civil authorities. Under the Ottomans, patriarchs and bishops always prayed for the Sultan, and always reminded the faithful that they should respect, obey and serve their temporal lords. But they carried their prayers often to ridiculous extremes of obsequiousness and servility; and in the present epoch of independence extravagant language of congratulations, good wishes and prayer can be cited, language used by the same prelate of two deadly enemies overturning and succeeding each other in a matter of months.

The constitution of 1908 established equality among the subjects of the Sultan regardless of their religious affiliation. Christians would serve in the armed forces on an equal footing with Muslims. There was rejoicing as a result among the Christians throughout the empire. In 1910 many Orthodox soldiers from Constantinople and Izmir came on a campaign against the Druzes in Syria; special Orthodox services in Greek were held in the Cathedral of Damascus to which these soldiers used to come on Sundays and where they used to make confession and take holy communion. The ecumenical patriarch had submitted to the government the request that, now that Orthodox subjects would be enlisted in the armed forces, no religious conversion be allowed while the men were away from home and special clergy be assigned to the forces to attend to the needs of Christian soldiers. He asked also for other privileges, and the mere fact that he could make such requests reflected the liberal, indeed the revolutionary and unprecedented, atmosphere which the Young Turks brought with them.

Gregory IV of Antioch established good relations with the Sultan, which stood him in good stead with the Ottoman authorities in Damascus during World War I. But the war was desperate so far as the fate of the Ottomans was concerned. They vented their despair



upon the Armenians in Asia Minor and the Christians in Lebanon and Syria. Tens (perhaps hundreds) of thousands of Christians perished in Lebanon from sheer starvation. Because of Gregory's good relations with the Turks, the Orthodox suffered less than the Maronites and Catholics in general. After the war this same Gregory cultivated the finest relations with the Arab authorities, and he was among the first to join in declaring Faysal I king of Syria.

So far as the relations of the Orthodox to their Muslim-Arab and Muslim-Turkish environments in the Middle East since World War I are concerned, we may here only note the following topics: (1) The Graeco-Turkish war in the early twenties and the massive exchange of populations between the two peoples as a result. (2) The displacement of tens of thousands of Orthodox from the present territory of Israel into Lebanon, Jordan, Syria and overseas as a result of the Israeli-Arab war of 1947-8. (3) The virtual liquidation of the Orthodox community in Egypt, and the emigration from Egypt to Lebanon since 1955 of tens of thousands of Orthodox of Lebanese or Syrian origin. (4) The migration of perhaps a hundred thousand Orthodox from Syria into Lebanon in recent years. (5) The fact that Arabic-speaking Orthodox played a leading role in the Arab nationalist movement and in the renewal of Arabic literature and Arab culture in general. (6) The attack upon the Orthodox churches and cemeteries of Constantinople in 1955. (7) The ordeals which the present ecumenical patriarch Athenagoras I, has been going through in his relations with the Turkish government, largely owing to the dispute between Turkey and Greece over Cyprus.

As selected sketches characterizing the way the Church has been kept inserted in its immediate Muslim environment, the preceding paragraphs yield a fairly adequate picture of the Church's relations to its socio-political world. The four ancient sees of Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem still exist, each having its own venerable patriarch and each counting still some faithful under its care; but Orthodoxy in the Middle East is practically reduced today to the see of Antioch, with the seat thereof in Damascus, and with its jurisdiction extending over Syria and Lebanon and the Lebanese and Syrian Orthodox emigration, overseas; and even here the Orthodoxy of Lebanon *vis-à-vis* that of Syria is by far the more secure and free, even though the Orthodox in Lebanon are a minority relatively to the uniates. Everywhere therefore theirs is a minority status. Due to many causes, principally their rootedness, which anteceded Islam, in the soil and race and culture of the Near East, they survived thirteen centuries of Muslim-Arab and Muslim-Turkish domination. Their relations to Islam over the centuries may be characterized, in one word, as existentially chequered, morally subservient, and spiritually tragic, although, in the Arab world at least, they worked more closely with their Muslim compatriots on civic, social, cultural and national problems than any other Christian group. Religiously, all that can be said of them is that the little remnant to which they are now reduced has nevertheless managed to keep



the faith, at least formally through the doctrine and liturgy of the Church, and considering concretely what they had to face and what existentially they went through, this in itself is a tremendous achievement, in fact nothing short of miraculous. So much for the past. The burden of the future we shall go into later.

Russia has always throughout history been deeply interested in the Orthodoxy of the Middle East. Russia therefore belongs to the external environment of this Orthodoxy. The Christianizing of the Slavic peoples was effected through Byzantine missionaries beginning with the ninth century, and an intimate relationship with Byzantium and its culture, thus established, has been maintained since then. Until the setting up of the independent patriarchate of Moscow in 1448, Russian Orthodoxy recognized the ultimate jurisdiction of the ecumenical patriarch, and even after it attained the autocephalous status it always looked upon itself as the child and heir of Byzantium. If the Russians called Moscow the third Rome, it was because, in their view, the first had lapsed into heresy for centuries, and the second had fallen into the hands of the infidels. In the seventeenth century the patriarchs of Alexandria and Antioch travelled to Russia seeking the spiritual, moral and material support of Moscow for their many problems.

On religious-cultural and political-military grounds, the Russians fought the Ottomans for centuries. They had always been lured by securing some firm foothold in the warm waters of the Mediterranean, and considering themselves the spiritual heirs of Byzantium, they looked upon the recapture of Constantinople as part of their national destiny. Europe, and especially England, stood in the way of their fulfilling this dream. We noted above the treaty of 1774 which recognized Russia's interest in the freedom and welfare of the Christian subjects of the Sultan. In the controversy between the Orthodox and uniates, Paris and Rome ranged themselves with the latter, while Russia consistently intervened with the Porte on the side of the former. In 1842 a delegation from the see of Antioch was sent to Russia to plead for assistance against the mounting activity of the Protestants and Catholics. In the nineteenth century, in opposing French and Russian influence in the Ottoman Empire, England patronized the non-Christians (Muslim and Druzes), and among the Christians, the Protestant missionaries; France supported the uniates (Maronites and Melkites); and Russia, the Orthodox.

The laying of the cornerstone of the Russian church of the Holy Trinity in Jerusalem by Grand Duke Constantine took place in 1859, and in 1881 the Princes Sergius, Paul and Constantine made their pilgrimage to the Holy City, where they were warmly received by the patriarch and clergy. The intention was that paver was never to cease in the chapel they founded in the Garden of Gethsemane in memory of their mother. Upon their return to Russia, a Holy Land society was established in 1882; its headquarters was to be Nazareth and its purpose the promotion of elementary education and the provision of free medical service.

Of the four sees, particularly intimate relations developed during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries between the see of Antioch and the Russian Orthodox Church. Greek influence and interest concentrated more on the other three sees. In 1848 the Holy Synod of Moscow proposed, and the Tsar approved, that the church of the Ascension near the Kremlin be given to the see of Antioch, to the intent that its revenue go to the education of the clergy and people of that see. In 1945 this church was replaced by another church whose ownership and the revenue therefrom have been retained by the Church of Antioch until this day. Missions were sent during the nineteenth century soliciting alms for the impoverished Church of Antioch from its more fortunate Russian sister, and the response, in characteristic Russian fashion, was always generous. Scores of men from Syria and Lebanon were sent to Russia, either for their higher theological or clerical education or to serve in the Antioch church of Moscow. Some of these men occupied very important positions in the Church of Antioch afterwards. One became patriarch (Alexandros III). Several became bishops. George Isbir Yārid taught in Russian schools and wrote what appears to be an important Russian work on Photius, on which Dvornik commented: “Ce travail n’a pas été assez pris en considération par ceux qui ont traité le problème.”<sup>1</sup> Raphael Hawāwīnī was elevated to the episcopacy and appointed the first Syrian bishop over the Syrian Orthodox of America by the Holy Russian Synod itself. The Syrian Antiochian Orthodox Church of North America was thus founded by the Russian Orthodox Church. Gregory IV visited Russia before World War I, and the two patriarchs who succeeded him so far, Alexandros III and Theodosius VI, visited Russia several times with many bishops as guests of the Russian Orthodox Church. Patriarch Alexey of Moscow visited Beirut in 1945 and all four sees, together with Beirut, in 1960, and established special relations with Antioch, by having a representative (now a Russian bishop) near the patriarch in Damascus. He also sent a Russian priest to serve the Russian community in Beirut. Many generous gifts came from the Russian Church in recent years, including icons and vestments, extensive medical equipment for the Orthodox hospital in Beirut, and a beautiful golden altar for St George’s Cathedral.

The Imperial Russian Orthodox Society for the Holy Land opened towards the end of the last century more than twenty schools, both for boys and girls, mostly in Lebanese towns and villages, but also in Damascus and Hims. It sponsored the translation of numerous school textbooks into Arabic. Many Russian monks were sent to Lebanese and Syrian monasteries. The “Eastern” character of the Orthodox Church in the Middle East is demonstrated by the fact that if any language is written on icons or walls or other objects or pieces of furniture inside an Orthodox church, this language is always Arabic or Greek or Russian, but never, so far as I know, French or English or any language using the Latin script.

1 François Dvornik, *Le Schisme de Photius* (Paris, Cerf, 1950), p. 36.

Russian consuls maintained close contacts at least with the see of Antioch. In a pastoral visit to the diocese of Hawrān (the church of Philadelphia of the Book of Revelation) in 1911, Gregory IV of Antioch was accompanied by Prince Boris Chakhovsky, the Russian consul in Damascus. In the service which he celebrated in a church named after St George, the patriarch spoke of “this ancient and venerable church” which had been so battered and ravaged by time, until God came to her succour through the providence of “the Tsar who with the eye of an eagle looked from the remote north upon her low estate”.<sup>2</sup>

The year 1913 was the 300th anniversary of the establishment of the Romanoff dynasty. The Tsar invited Gregory IV of Antioch to visit Russia and be at the head of the religious celebrations planned for the occasion. The patriarch arrived in St Petersburg in February of that year. The Russian press warmly welcomed him to the soil of Russia, and praised his character, eloquence and piety, especially his firm stands in the face of the Catholic, Protestant and Masonic currents in the Middle East. In one of the ceremonies, Anthony, a Russian archbishop, addressed the patriarch of the Church of Antioch in the name of the Church of Russia as follows:

For 250 years the defenders of ecumenical Orthodoxy have not visited us. It is with veneration and happiness that we look upon you today, seeing in you the gladness of the Christian Church at her most beautiful because in your Apostolic Person you occupy her highest summit. With utter spiritual joy we honour in your Person the supreme authority of the Church. While your throne no longer boasts of its former riches and external glory, nevertheless it is full of glory incorruptible, the glory of ever breaching the word of salvation, the glory of struggling, in all prudence and with a heart pure and a resolve unmovable, for our divine faith. We do not honour the episcopacy for its riches and pomp, but for its spiritual struggle and self-denial. That is why we behold in your Person the splendour of Peter, the first head of the Church of Antioch, of St Ignatius the great... and of many others of God's elect. The Russian people, who revere the Apostolic struggle which has come down uninterrupted in your holy Church from the first disciples until now, perceive in you the bearer of this church glory, the glory of the harmony of earth and heaven, of the Church and Christ; and lift their voice with thanksgiving because they have been deemed worthy to behold the Person of your Beatitude.

Then, falling on his knees, Anthony added: “And here, prostrating themselves at your feet, the Russian people welcome you, rejoicing on their knees because you have entered the Holy Monastery of the capital of the north.”<sup>3</sup>

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2 Asad J. Rustum, *The Church of the City of God Great Antioch*, vol. III (Beirut, 1963), p. 349.

3 *Ibid*, p. 368.

On another occasion the Tsar received the patriarch in royal splendour. Sitting in his throne with the patriarch on his right, Nicholas turned to Gregory and said:

“I have heard for a long time of your intention to come here and I have much longed to see you. I know fully your uprightness and your piety, so I ask you to beseech and pray to the Lord God for me.” Gregory answered: “I am a sinful man, my lord; nevertheless, may the Lord grant thee according to thy heart and faith; may He fulfil all the longings of thy bosom; and may He ‘build up thy throne to all generations.’” When the Tsar heard these words of David coming from the venerable prelate of the East, he was deeply moved, and descending from his throne he kissed the patriarch’s right hand for the second time.<sup>4</sup>

It was on this trip that Gregory was asked by the Holy Russian Synod to elevate a certain archimandrite Alexey to the episcopacy; this he gladly did. It was this same Alexey who was destined to become metropolitan of Leningrad in 1933 and patriarch of Moscow in 1945, and who is still the head of the Russian Church until today. So intimately have the fates of Moscow and Antioch been intertwined in recent years that first Moscow ordains for Antioch its first bishop in North America, and then Antioch ordains a bishop who later became the patriarch of all the Russias.

The burden of this section has not been to provide a “history” of the relations between the Orthodoxy of the Middle East and the Orthodoxy of Russia; we have only illustrated in general how the latter Orthodoxy constitutes a sort of external environment within which the former Orthodoxy lives and with which it interacts. There are underlying affinities between the two Orthodoxies, stemming in part from their common Byzantine heritage, in part from the fact that both are “Eastern” or “non-Western”. How may we characterize this Eastern and Byzantine type of Christianity as to its essence? There is a certain indefiniteness about its formulations, quite unlike the severe and clear-cut definitions of the romanized and aristotelianized West. In Orthodoxy much is left unsaid and undefined, and the attempt at defining it is often considered a provocation and a sin, much as God judged when Satan provoked David to number Israel. Orthodox is somewhat informal and democratic despite its hierarchical ecclesiastical order. Authority and tradition are thus accepted as a matter of course. The stress is on love and freedom, although a certain amount of phyletism is apparent in the identification of church and culture. The Fathers and the early Councils play the controlling role. There is thus a certain amount of existential discontinuity owing to the tragic discontinuities which afflicted the history of Orthodoxy itself. Despite this, the whole man is affirmed, without chopping him up into aspects and distinctions and functions and

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4 *Ibid.* pp. 368-9.

levels and rules. A certain degree of anarchy is also apparent, alike in thought and in the relations between flocks and shepherds and among the shepherds themselves. This anarchy is at times delightful and refreshing, but usually it helps only to enfeeble the soul. An educated Orthodox of the Middle East understands and appreciates a Dostoyevsky or a Berdyaev much more than an Aristotle or an Aquinas. The very soul of Orthodoxy breathes mystery, otherness, transcendence. Morals are considered important, but Orthodoxy is not moralistic: its intention is to bring out the mystery and freedom of Being. The moral-puritan ingredient in the Divine Liturgy is virtually nil: it is all about the real, existing, transcendent God. A sinner forgets his sin and obtains release therefrom because he is wholly absorbed in God. Besides the absolute reality of God and the efficacy of His mother's intercession, nothing is more striking in the Divine Liturgy of St John Chrysostom which the faithful know by heart than the repeated call to trust the mercy and loving-kindness of Christ. With respect to this dimension of transcendence Orthodoxy is at one with Islam, although of course it tempers it with God's humanity which Islam does not. The shirt of Chrysostom dominates the spirituality of Orthodoxy, and so to understand Orthodoxy one must steep oneself in the incomparable homilies and the magnificent liturgy of this Saint. Nay, to understand a good deal of the characteristic Russian spirit, even under communism, the knowledge of Chrysostom is indispensable.

But for the Russian Orthodox Church, Orthodoxy in the Middle East would have been an orphan. The Churches of the West come to it as to something alien: they want to change and convert it. Russian Orthodoxy comes to it as to bone of its bones and flesh of its flesh. It is not another, it is the same, at least in liturgy and in spirit. The Russian Church comes to share with it its trials and its blessings. People glibly speak of the Russian Church being used by the Soviet State in the Middle East. Thank God for the Orthodox Church in the Soviet State, and thank God for any contact with that church. Who is using whom remains to be seen at the end of time. Paul did not despise his Roman citizenship: he used it to the glory of Christ. When one sees a Russian patriarch with the cross on his breast standing in the royal gates and blessing the people with another cross in his hand, and when one attends a two-hour service in which a Russian bishop officiates and a Russian deacon assists, one is profoundly moved. Such witness to Jesus Christ cannot be altogether insincere, no matter who is using whom. For Jesus Christ is such that insincerity with respect to Him cannot long endure. Therefore, give me a witnessing person, in any system and under any circumstances, and I am immediately sure there is some sincerity there. For it must never be forgotten "that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost". One can therefore say that the relations between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Orthodox Church of the Middle East have been so intimate that the former in truth belongs to much more than the external environment of the latter. In historical issues affecting the character and destiny of the Church, Middle Eastern Orthodoxy waits for the guidance and lead of the Russian Church.

Islam, with its laws, beliefs and religious outlook, is Orthodoxy's immediate world in the Middle East. The Russian Orthodox world has been perhaps its most important external environment. But the Orthodox of the Middle East are also in daily contact on every level of existence with other fellow Christians, principally with those in organic communion with Rome (the uniates). The important uniates of the Middle East are the Maronites, the Melkites or Greek Catholics, the Chaldeans, the Copts, the Syrians, and the Armenians. Of the last four there are still many who are not in communion with Rome, but the term uniate would apply to them only when they are in such communion. All these groups have their own non-Latin rites and their own patriarchs, and all of them profess the identical faith of the Roman Catholic Church. The Melkites, following the identical Byzantine rite of the Orthodox, are descendants from Orthodox bodies which at some point since 1054 re-established communion with Rome. The Catholics of the Middle East include also Western Catholic missionaries (Jesuits, Franciscans, Dominicans, Carmelites, and others) and many Western Catholics engaged in business, education or diplomacy. The total life of the Orthodox in the Middle East must be interpreted, not only in relation to Islam and the larger world of Orthodoxy beyond, but in relation to the Roman Catholic world, both native and Western.

The relations of the Orthodox with the non-Catholic Christians of the Middle East have been frozen ever since the latter were excluded by the early Councils (principally that of Chalcedon) from communion with the Church Universal. Outwardly, relations are friendly and cordial, and there could even be intermarriage subject to conversion, but there is no doctrinal or liturgical or communal fellowship. These non-Catholic non-Orthodox Christians are good citizens wherever they are, although they have sustained many persecutions. They usually make common cause, wherever they can, with the Orthodox and Catholics on broad issues affecting the fate and freedom of the Christian community in the Middle East. There have been lately contacts and conversations between them and the ecumenical patriarch Athenagoras with a view to examining if fundamental points of doctrine, especially those which originate in the definitions of Chalcedon, may not be adjusted to the full satisfaction of the Orthodox Church so as to enable this Church to accept them back into full communion with it. The attitude of the Orthodox Church in this regard appears to be that any re-examination of position is welcome, but the Church obviously cannot alter the intent of dogma as handed down from the early Councils and as understood and interpreted by the doctors of the Church. There is also a general feeling that the correct approach to the problem of unity in this ecumenical age is for the non-Catholic non-Orthodox Christian bodies in the Middle East to reconstitute, if possible, with the Orthodox Church the Church of the East, and then in this corporate form to explore with the Church of the West what can be done to bring about the unity of East and West in the Church Universal. I think the

Church of Rome itself is no longer interested in creating splinter uniate bodies in the Middle East, so that it would probably bless this approach of the East first consolidating its own ranks, while it keeps extending the hand of fellowship to all, in the spirit of comprehension and charity. There is an underlying spiritual-cultural affinity between the Orthodox and the non-Orthodox non-Catholics of the Middle East beyond and above any doctrinal differences congealed in the anathemas of the Councils, an affinity that brackets them together as quite apart from the Roman Catholics. It is this extra-dogmatic “Eastern” affinity that may help considerably in bringing them together, although the Orthodox Church cannot “buy” agreement with them at the expense of wider disagreement with Rome. All of this of course is human reflexion; the exact intention of the Holy Ghost may be quite different.

If relations between the Orthodox and the non-Catholic Christians in the Middle East have been frozen for centuries, and there is nothing moving or creative about them, the situation is entirely different with respect to the relations between the Orthodox and the Catholics. Here the confrontation is most active, most challenging, and most dynamic. There is real movement here, and things are really happening.

Present-day relations between Orthodox and Catholics in the Middle East must be viewed against the background of four basic developments which have, in varying degrees of relevance and potency, produced a peculiar legacy of attitude and feeling: the great schism of 1054; the Latin Crusades which were attended by most unfortunate acts against the Orthodox and their culture, acts which led the Orthodox of Constantinople to prefer, if it were a question of strict choice between Latin-Catholic domination (or assimilation) and Ottoman-Muslim domination, “the turbans of the *shaykhs* to the crowns of the cardinals”; the uniate movement, especially that of the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which culminated in the establishment of the Greek Catholic (Melkite) Church in the Middle East with its own parallel hierarchy to that of the Orthodox Church; and the proselytizing activity of Catholic missions.

The schism and the Crusades fall outside the proper scope of this study. Both ultimately involve the human difficulty of reconciling East and West, Greek and Latin, the claims of the particular and the claims of the universal. The Church, *to be* the Church, must rise above, by including and accommodating itself to, all particularisms, subject to the ineluctable proviso that all that does not accord with the will of Jesus Christ in any particularism, be it Eastern or Western, Greek or Latin, cannot be tolerated or risen above, nor can it be included or accommodated in the universality of the Church. Thus, if any particularism contains beliefs or practices condemned by Jesus Christ, they must be given up. But this is the metaphysical problem underlying both the schism and the Crusades.



The student of the events of the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries which brought about the establishment and consolidation of the Greek Catholic (Melkite) Church in the Middle East is struck by four things: (1) the utter disorder, decay and corruption in the Orthodox Church itself; (2) the intense activity of the Catholic missionaries, principally the Jesuits; (3) the fact that the Porte helped in causing the Orthodox people to fall out among themselves; and (4) the fact that the truth about many of these events is very difficult to ascertain, so that contradictory stories could be shown to be historically equally plausible.

On the role of the Ottomans, one or two observations must be made. Despite (or perhaps because of) Russia's influence with the Porte, and despite (or perhaps because of) the presence of large and influential Greek colonies throughout the empire, it was the fear of the Ottomans lest the Orthodox Church, under the protection or with the support of the Russian government and the Russian Church, might increase Russia's influence in the empire and might subvert it, that conduced the Porte to look with favour upon splitting up the Orthodox people among themselves and having some of them re-establish their allegiance to Rome. At the time of their capture of Constantinople in 1453, the Ottomans were more afraid of the West than of Russia, and so they opposed all projects of Orthodox communion with Rome; from the seventeenth century onwards they became more afraid of Russia than of the West, and so they favoured the splintering westwards of as much of the Orthodox Church as possible. This is the essential meaning of the Eastern Question: the rivalry of the non-Middle-Eastern world with respect to the Middle East, the division of Europe (including Russia) about the Ottoman Empire, the inability of the West (including Russia) to make up its mind once and for all concerning "the sick man of Europe", the cynical letting this "sick man" remain sick rather than curing him or letting him die, the perpetual dragging of the Eastern Question from indecision to indecision, the ability of Turkey to play off and balance East against West and West against East from generation to generation. All these phenomena repeat themselves today to perfection, albeit under different circumstances and with different actors. There is thus an eternal character about the Middle East: its destiny appears to be never to belong once and for all to one master, whether the master be itself or someone else. The Middle East is always an undecided question.

The documents reveal an incredible amount of intrigue, malice, spitefulness, meanness, mercenariness, venality, pettiness, feuding, vengefulness, and violence. Neither the uniates nor the Orthodox were free from any of these traits. They also instigated or sided with non-Christians against each other. They did everything that St Paul condemns in his epistles. There simply was no Christian charity. This is what happens when utter corruption and rottenness supervene. The indisputable outcome of all this confusion and decadence, however, is that there are today two hierarchies of one and the same rite stemming from the

same trunk--the mother Orthodox Church and the Greek Catholic (Melkite) Church. This is the result at once of the decadence of Orthodoxy, the active alertness of Rome, the support by the French and Austrians of the uniate movement, and the successful playing off by the Porte of Christian forces against each other, forces existing within the empire and forces impinging upon it from without. The fact that Orthodoxy still exists betokens that it was not altogether decadent and that Russia was not altogether ineffectual. The fact that two hierarchies now exist betokens that neither Orthodox nor Russia was powerful enough to prevent part of Orthodoxy from splintering off into the bosom of Rome, even if that meant turning its back on the other part. It does nobody any good now to dwell on this whole sad episode. That is the task of the "pure" historian. But there is before us today a far higher task than "pure" historical research, a task attested alike by the three great men of our times, John XXIII, Paul VI and Athenagoras I: to heal wounds, to pray and work for the regeneration of rotten human nature, to bring hearts closer together, to forgive all, past and present, to ask forgiveness for all, past and present, to press hard towards the prize of the unity of love in the bond of peace in Jesus Christ.

I shall touch only on one of two points to illustrate some of the factors involved. In his instructions to his new ambassador to the Porte in 1728, Louis XV made it clear that the French government had three aims in spreading the Roman Catholic faith in the Ottoman Empire: the Christianizing of the Muslims, the conversion of the schismatics, and the uprooting of the seeds of heresy. The first was most delicate, as was proven by the fact that Rome herself had forbidden her missionaries to preach the Gospel to the Muslims. Western Christian missionary effort, then, was to concentrate on wooing the Christians not in communion with Rome back into communion with her. Western missionaries and native Catholics intervened with the French ambassador to support the uniate party among the Orthodox, but after he had time to study the situation and despite the instructions of his sovereign, he came to the opposite conclusion, and he wrote back to Paris in 1730 that the overzealous Catholic missionaries should be curbed, that the extreme uniates among the Orthodox should not be supported, and that, in the interests of concord and amity among the Christians, it was better to work with the moderate Orthodox elements. In another report in 1740 this same ambassador stressed the point that the spectacle of Christian fighting Christian in the world of Islam encouraged the Ottomans both to play the Christians off against each other and, by thus weakening them, to be more harsh and repressive in their treatment of them. He concluded that the only prudent policy was the promotion of love and forgiveness among the Christians themselves.<sup>5</sup>

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5      Père Antoine Rabbath, *Documents inédits pour servir à l'Histoire du Christianisme en Orient* (Paris, 1910), tome 2, pp. 388-9 and 561 f.

Maximus Mazlūm was the Greek Catholic patriarch in the first half of the nineteenth century. Under his energetic and determined leadership his Church attained its status as a uniate Church wholly independent from the Orthodox Church. He was made a French subject in 1822, thus enjoying French legal protection under the system of capitulations. There was active participation both by France and by the Latin clergy in the process of consolidating the Greek Catholic Church and separating it from the Orthodox Church. Maximus remained under the direct jurisdiction of the Armenian Catholic patriarch of Constantinople until 1837, when the sultan granted him a *berat* whereby, while still under the ultimate jurisdiction of the Armenian patriarch, he acquired virtual autonomy over all the three sees of Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem. In 1848 a second *berat* recognized him as completely independent from his former Armenian chief, while the other uniates remained subordinate to him. With this act of the sultan the establishment of a thoroughgoing parallelism (except for the external fact that whereas the Orthodox had three separate patriarchs for the three sees, the Greek Catholics combined all three under one patriarch) between the Greek Catholic hierarchy and that of the Orthodox was finally solemnized. The reaction of the four Orthodox patriarchs of the Middle East to the establishment of this parallel hierarchy was to issue a statement in 1838 rejecting and condemning this latinizing activity and repudiating the separation of the Greek Catholics from jurisdictional unity with their Orthodox brethren.

The Catholic shock helped to awaken the Orthodox Church. Without this shock Orthodoxy might have slumbered and decayed further. The response has been to open many schools, publish much Orthodox literature, renovate the music, found many new societies, educate the clergy, exhibit some concern for the material conditions under which they live, and in general fall back upon Orthodoxy's rich inner material and spiritual resources. The Orthodox Youth Movement is part of this response. We shall examine the promise of some of these manifestations later in this essay.

You cannot stop individual conversion; you cannot prevent individual change of allegiance; nor are you morally permitted to do so. Freedom of conscience is ultimate and sacred. Until the end of time there will be fluidity between the confessions on an individual basis. The methods of proselytizing may be repugnant, but when you come upon a corrupt scene (corrupt, not in the light of subjective criteria, but as judged by the objective norms of the Gospel, and by the wonderful flowering that occurred in these parts in the early centuries) and try to salvage as much out of it as possible, awakening people to the infinite riches and boundless grace of Jesus Christ, you cannot be blamed. You will be blamed if you looked upon it and did nothing. The Catholics and the Protestants came to the East and found, relatively to what obtained in the West, death there; it was the Holy Spirit in them that moved them to blow some life into this desolation. Thank God for that. The Orthodox

Church can blame only its death for this. Christianity was all but snuffed out of existence under Muslim rule; in North Africa it disappeared altogether; it was a miracle it did not disappear in the Near East. What will you do, then, if you are in the shoes of the Christians of the West? Here they come and they find remnants, relics, barely moving corpses. They try to resuscitate them as best they can; they use the best methods they know; many individual stupidities are committed, but there is exigency, urgency, impatience in historical decision; they cannot look upon death and do nothing, especially in a region which was once so alive and to whose life the rest of the Christian world owes so much; they cannot wait until death so to speak moves itself. In the case of Maximus Mazlūm, for instance, he was undoubtedly torn between two things: his profound desire for unity with Rome which every Christian must feel, and his attachment to the Greek Church which would not move with him. In a crisis of this order one goes through the agony of hell. How does he resolve it? Nobody knows what happens in a man's soul caught in the vice of such a conflict of allegiances; he himself probably does not know what is happening within him; God alone knows; God alone finally judges. Even his mixed motives are not important; God makes use of everything, mixed motives and everything, even the devil. Finally everything conduces to the glory of the Holy Trinity.

But while individual conversion can never and should never be stopped, *after a certain point two lines of policy* can be adopted by a more virile church descending upon a relatively dead one: to discourage change of allegiance, throwing people back upon their own spiritual resources, working with them all the time as closely as possible, and always assuring them of your love and fellowship; and when the church, the corporate body, the hierarchy, as such, shows signs of reawakening, of rediscovering its own proper heritage, of letting the Holy Spirit creatively and gloriously blow upon it, of assuming and pushing on with its responsibilities, then the line of policy should be to work and collaborate with it directly, in the bond of fellowship and love, on a footing of equality, letting the Holy Spirit itself gradually and freely open the eyes of both churches to the right *order of relationship* between them according to the will of Christ. There is no general rule by which one can decide in advance and as it were mechanically when that "certain point" is reached; that can only be left to the responsible decision of the more virile church under concrete circumstances.

There is not only a difference in approach and method, but a radical difference in tone and spirit, between the attempts at church unity made by Rome in the nineteenth century (by Pius IX in 1848 and Leo XIII in 1894) and the Orthodox replies thereto, and what has been happening lately under the aegis and with the inspiration of John XXIII, Paul VI and Athenagoras I. There is in the new climate minimum of the old spirit of "we have always been right and you have always been wrong". With the apparently sincere abandonment of

all polemics and all mutual recrimination, we seem to be on the threshold of a new era in the relations between Orthodoxy and Catholicism. The gentle pressure must be maintained; the sisterly challenge must not relent; and the aim should always be the glory of God and the overcoming of all human limitation and sin.

Thousands of Orthodox youth have studied in American schools, in the United States and in the Middle East. Athens College, Sofia College, Robert College in Istanbul and its sister women's institution, Smyrna College, Aleppo College, the American University of Beirut, the American University at Cairo, Asyūt College, and scores of American, British and German missionary secondary schools throughout the region, all number important Orthodox men and women among their graduates. At least three Orthodox bishops in the see of Antioch are former students at the American University of Beirut.

Whatever the causes, the fact is that the Protestant missionary activity over the last century and a half in the Middle East cannot boast of many recruits from Islam or Catholicism: Protestant converts in the Middle East stem overwhelmingly from Orthodox origins.

Who can forget the Holy Land? Who can forget Jerusalem, Bethany, Bethlehem, Nazareth, Joppa, Caesarea Philippi, Jordan, Galilee, the Dead Sea, Tyre and Sidon, Lebanon? People's right hand would sooner forget her cunning, and their tongue would sooner cleave to the roof of their mouth, before they forget these names and places. From now until the end of time, namely, until the Second Coming of Christ, and even beyond, these names will evoke in the heart of the Christian who loves Jesus Christ above everything else the deepest longing and the purest tears. So missionaries *had* to come from the Protestant world of the North and West to the Catholic and Orthodox lands of the Middle East. No power on earth can deny them this right. No limitation on their part or on the part of the Christians in these lands can prevent them from coming. They wanted to share with the remnants of Christianity here their own experience of Jesus Christ. Those of us who live in the Near East (I am now distinguishing between the Near and the Middle East), whether Christian, Muslim or Jewish, must understand and accept this eternal lure of our land: Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was born, lived, taught, talked to the woman from Samaria at Jacob's well, suffered, and was glorified *here*--not in Poland or Peru, not in the Cameroons or Korea, not in Florida or France. Therefore Protestant missionaries *had* to come to the Middle East, and a thousand million years from now, Christians from China, or from Mars or some planet in the Betelgeuse system, will come here too, to witness and to worship, and to share with the inhabitants of these hallowed lands their new and different experience of Jesus Christ. Let no Arab nationalism, let no Jewish Zionism, let no Middle Eastern Christian fear or sentimentalism, let no Western materialism, let no Christian secularism anywhere, beguile any man into

believing that the Near East will ever cease to be a cosmic magnet for all those who know and love Jesus Christ. This is its unalterable destiny. We did not create it, we had nothing to do with it; in fact many of us, scared and limited as we are, wish it and have wished it otherwise: it was all determined by Jesus Christ himself.

So Christian missionaries *had* to come from the West. They were most sincere and dedicated. They were as human as the rest of us. Let no man judge them by their humanity alone, although by this scale they would still stand above most of us. They can only be fairly judged by their burden and their witness. They were bursting with something they wanted to say. Behind every limitation and ambiguity, what they really were saying was this: that they *too* had known the Lord Jesus Christ, and drawn by His star, they were coming here, this time from the West, to offer Him in the land of His birth and passion the gifts of their hearts. They struggled, they suffered, they fumbled, they served, they were tried, but here it was where they fought the good fight, here it was where they witnessed, and above all here it was where most of them died. And a crown is doubtless reserved for them at the hands of the Just Judge, at the hands of Him who sees all and understands all and in His lovingkindness rewards all war beyond their expectations or merits. Such were the Jessups and the Porters, the Blisses and the Van Dycks, the Websters and the Adamses, the Wests and the Crawfords, the Browns and the Dodges, the Closes and the Dormans, the Nickoleys and the Seelyes, the Days and the Dodds, the Nicols and the Stoltzfuses, the Watsons and the Smiths, the Quays and the Leavitts; and countless others. They established schools, founded hospitals, tended the sick, educated the uncouth and ignorant, trained the mind to see in the laboratory and observe in the field, taught youth to gird up their loins like men, imparted to the children of the Middle East new dignity and self-reliance, translated the Bible, published books, preached the Gospel, shared the deepest in their heart and in their life. They challenged the older churches and roused them from their sleep. If they somewhat misunderstood Mary, the Sacraments, the Saints, the Eucharist, the holy images, the liturgy, the hierarchy, the sign of the Cross, the holy feasts, the monastic life, the continuity of “the tradition--all authentic marks of Near Eastern spirituality--that was their limitation, no doubt brought about by their honest zeal, and by that blinding impatience which often attends an effulgence of light. And now after a century and a half there is humility and tolerance, there is understanding and thankfulness, all around, on the part of the older churches for the immense labour of love thus conceived and thus lavished, and on the part of the comers from the North and West for seeing that the older churches did not lack the fullness of the deposit of faith, though they were wholly unworthy and at times wholly unaware of it.

Greek Orthodox existence in the Middle East cannot be fully understood apart from the total impact, both direct and indirect, of the great American and European Protestant missionary movement of the past century and a half.

The “presence” of the Western powers is part of the external environment in which the Orthodox of the Middle East live and have their being. The Middle East was opened up to the West in recent times first through the impact of Napoleon. French envoys often worked hand in hand with Catholic missionaries, as well as with the native Catholic clergy. This close collaboration with Catholics was guaranteed to the French by juridical instruments concluded with the Vatican, and after the fall of the Ottoman Empire a new concordat was signed in 1926 according to which the French Republic and her representatives would receive special honour in special high Masses celebrated in particular Catholic churches in the Asian territories which formerly belonged to the Ottoman Empire.

Nor does France yield to any Western power in the primacy of her interests and privileges in the Holy Places in Palestine, as was demonstrated in the debate over the fate of Jerusalem and the Holy Places in the United Nations in 1947, 1948 and 1949. There have been and there still are most vigorous French schools, both lay and religious, throughout the Middle East, principally in Egypt, Syria and Lebanon. In sheer numbers, both of schools and of students enrolled therein, and in intensity of cultural influence exerted thereby, France surpasses any Western power in the Middle East. There is a traditional friendship between France and Lebanon, repeatedly affirmed in history, most recently by the Presidents of Lebanon and France when they met in Paris in May 1965. The Maronites of Lebanon (the largest single religious bloc and by far the most influential element in the country) have always had closer relations with France than with any other Western power, and it was on the strength of these relations that the Maronite patriarch right after World War I asked in the name of Lebanon for a French mandate over the country. The sense of independence and distinctness in Lebanon is principally fostered by the immense cultural and political influence of the Université St Joseph, a French Jesuit institution in Beirut. If the “presence” of France in Lebanon is so dominant and decisive, and if, as we shall see later, Orthodoxy in the Middle East is being increasingly squeezed into Lebanon, it is impossible to exaggerate the importance of Catholic and lay France as an external determinant of this Orthodoxy.

Orthodox existence is determined by this massive presence, both directly through the many Orthodox who study in French schools or are otherwise impregnated with French culture, and indirectly through the many Catholic communities to whom France accorded preferential treatment, both political and cultural, and with whom the Orthodox have to associate and interact both as fellow citizens and fellow Christians. It was fear of this preferential treatment, as well as other causes (both Arab-national and Orthodox-international), which led the Greek Orthodox Patriarch, Gregory IV, when the fate of Lebanon and Syria was being deliberated by the victors of World War I, to express disapproval of France being granted a mandate over Syria and Lebanon.



The meaning of France is not exhausted by the foregoing. Right after World War I Paris became a world Orthodox centre, both through the Russian Orthodox seminary that was established there and through the writings of many Russian thinkers, notably Berdyaev. Some Middle Eastern clergy studied in the Paris seminary, and some Orthodox thinkers in the Middle East have been influenced by Berdyaev.

Because of her Indian empire, Britain viewed the Middle East as strategically vital to her. It is this strategic necessity which explains at once Britain's stubborn opposition to the penetration of the region by Russia, her nineteenth-century policy of "safeguarding the integrity of the Ottoman Empire", the firm hold which she retained on Egypt and the Suez Canal, and her demanding and obtaining a mandate over Palestine. All this was reinforced after World War I by the extensive and--to her industry--absolutely vital oil interests which she developed and consolidated in the Persian Gulf area.

In opposing Russia (the Crimean War was only one instance) Britain helped to weaken the influence of the principal protector of Orthodoxy in the Middle East. Nor did she supply an alternative protection herself, for example, through the solicitude of the Anglican Church. For more than a century and until after World War II, no Western power had the pervasive and decisive influence that Britain enjoyed in the Middle East, and the Orthodox, no less than everybody else, were quite conscious of and had to adjust to this all-encompassing ***Pax Britannica***. Her rivalry with France, ever since Napoleon's adventure in Egypt, led Britain to oppose French influence in the Middle East; and if this meant also opposing, or at least not encouraging, Catholicism, the motive was more political than religious, more to avoid further complications than to spread a rival religious persuasion; although Britain did show sympathy towards Protestant missions in the Middle East.

We thus see how the meaning of Britain in Orthodox existence in the Middle East consisted, negatively, in setting limits to Russian Orthodox help and protection and curing the Orthodox of any extravagant and therefore false expectations of succour from outside on religious grounds; and positively, in encouraging the Orthodox to identify themselves--what they were otherwise prone to do--with native nationalist movements (this was the principal effect of Lawrence upon Orthodox leaders), in thinking realistically in terms of peaceful co-existence with their Muslim fellow citizens, in opening the world of the West to them through the English language and through education in English schools, as well as the general order that the ***Pax Britannica*** promoted and vouchsafed.

America determines the Orthodox of the Middle East, temporally, through the Greek, Syrian and Lebanese emigration to the United States, through the preponderant political role which the United States has been playing in the affairs of the Middle East since World

War II, and through American commerce and enterprise; and spiritually, through American schools in the area, through the many students who have studied in the United States, through American films, books and magazines, through the flourishing Orthodox churches in the United States, and through the American Protestant missionary movement.

Practically all the Middle Eastern emigration to the Western Hemisphere, as well as to Australia and New Zealand, is Christian (in the case of Lebanon, as many people of Lebanese origin live abroad as in Lebanon, and they are overwhelmingly Christian), with the result that there is hardly a Christian family in the Middle East (outside the Copts) that does not claim some relative in the United States, and this has tended to some extent to “Americanize” Christian, and (owing to the relatively greater French influence on the non-Orthodox Christians) especially Orthodox, existence. Although not in the same style nor with the same motives, the United States has nevertheless exerted in recent years the same dominant influence in the Middle East as did Britain formerly, although Britain has never been quite absent from the scene despite her reverses in Suez and Iraq. The policy of the United States is to ensure what it calls the stability of the area, and when broken down into its elements this phrase means the security of Israel, the prevention of change of frontiers by force, the protection of the vast American oil investments, and the exclusion, or at least the limitation as much as possible, of communist influence in the area. In the American enterprises in the Middle East many Orthodox have been earning their living. Taken as a whole, there is thus a marked American economic, political and cultural presence which makes itself significantly felt in Orthodox existence in the Middle East.

The very word “East” in the phrase “the Near and Middle East” proves that this region is intimately related to “the West”. This is true historically, geopolitically and economically. In so far as there is a trace of religious content (or at least of humane-cultural-liberal content) in the West’s dealings with the Middle East, the Christians and therefore the Orthodox receive some sustenance. Speaking of the West without Russia, this religious content, if it exists, can only be Catholic or Protestant; in that case the Orthodox are relatively at a disadvantage. In so far as the dealings of the West, with or without Russia, are purely secular-political-economic (which is pre-eminently the case today), the Christians and therefore the Orthodox are culturally and religiously submerged. The Orthodox Church must struggle alone today, expecting only such indirect sympathy and help as she may manage accidentally to glean from the Church of Russia, the Church of Greece, the Church of England, and the World Council of Churches.

The relations between the four Orthodox sees of the Middle East were often troubled. What saved them from falling out completely with each other was their identity of liturgy and doctrine, their common traditions, the fact that their flocks constituted small minorities

in the Middle Eastern world of Islam and therefore they had no alternative but to cling to one another, the recognition by the sees of Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem of a primacy of honour to the ecumenical patriarch of Constantinople, and of his being preceded in this respect in the Church Universal only by the patriarch of Rome, the fact that the Ottoman Turks from the beginning accorded a certain legal status to the primacy of the patriarch of Constantinople over the other patriarchs, a status which enabled the ecumenical patriarch to exercise real authority, always of course within limits, over the other sees in moments of crisis, and the appearance now and then of wise and forgiving patriarchs who helped to heal whatever breaches happened to exist at the time.

Two outstanding cases of inter-see friction may be cited: the quarrel over the successor to Athanasius V, patriarch of Jerusalem, in 1844, when Constantinople tried to extend its influence in that see and the quarrel over the Bulgarian question in 1872 when Constantinople convened a Council which excommunicated the Bulgarian exarch on grounds of phyletism, and either the clergy or the laity of the sees of Jerusalem and Antioch did not go along with the findings of the Council. A third case concerned the see of Antioch. During the nineteenth century this see fought for its independence from Constantinople. Ottoman intrigue, Greek nationalism, Arab nationalism, and Russian Orthodox (and even political) interests, all had a hand, of course in different ways, in this fight. Independence was finally won in the last year of the century when Meletius II succeeded the deposed Spiridon. Meletius was then recognized by the entire Orthodox world except by the three patriarchs of Constantinople, Alexandria and Jerusalem, and this isolation of Antioch persisted until the ascent of Gregory IV to the throne of Antioch in 1906 when amity and concord were once again restored between the four sister sees.

The risk of being afflicted by such frictions, jealousies, and divisions is exactly the price which the Orthodox Church pays for not adopting the Roman principle of strict centralization. (I am not thinking here of the dogmatic-canonical character of this principle; I am here only speaking rationally.) In a predominantly Christian world, such as the world of Byzantium or the world of Russia or even the world of Greece, such a risk may be worth taking, in view of the local independence and responsibility thus assured, without loss of Christian freedom and anchorage. But in an overwhelmingly non-Christian world, such as the Middle East, in which Christian freedom and anchorage are already considerably circumscribed, the risk tells tragically upon the soul of the faithful. Here the communion is superficial and the sense of unity abstract and sentimental. Here reigns dreadful solitude and there is pathetic drift. You cannot expect great spiritual heights from four orphans quarrelling miserably like children in a totally alien world. That they survived at all under such conditions is indeed a miracle, but it is not of their making. It is false to conclude from

the foregoing that the norm in inter-see relations was feuding and quarrelling; this was rather the exception, and the rule was concord and co-operation. But quarrelling and feuding did mar their relations, and did determine externally Orthodox existence in the Middle East.

Recent years witnessed no occasions for friction, as the four sees are now completely independent in the conduct of their internal affairs. Relations between them have therefore lately been smooth and friendly. While in the pan-Orthodox gatherings which have lately taken place at Rhodes no decision could be taken against the wishes of the churches of Greece and Russia, especially with respect to Orthodoxy's attitude towards the ecumenism of Rome, and while Antioch has at times humbly mediated between these two great sister Churches, Athenagoras of Constantinople has been playing a leading role, and the other three sees of the Middle East have tended to show complete solidarity with his position. This is a very precarious matter, as the whole thing has depended on the outstanding personality of Athenagoras who is now fairly well advanced in years.

Two of the cases of inter-see friction to which we referred in the preceding section--the Bulgarian question and the controversy, which raged in the last decade of the last century, as to whether it should be a Greek or an Arab who should occupy the throne of Antioch--raise the question of the relations between the faithful natives and the dominant Greek clergy. The Greeks fought tenaciously to maintain their supremacy. It is easy to see the virus of nationalism in all this, both on the part of the Greeks and of the faithful, but the thing cannot be so glibly interpreted. The Greeks were actuated by a most praise-worthy sense of responsibility; they hated wantonly to leave the tremendous divine treasure entrusted to them in unworthy or immature hands; and the natives were naturally unhappy for having to deal with superiors who did not understand their language and did not quite appreciate their customs and culture; and the Meletius solution of 1899 was perhaps inevitable. This is the problem of all struggle for independence, and while in the case of individuals the age of eighteen or twenty-one may be rationally assigned for the "attainment of reason", when it comes to political or cultural or religious "independence", no such natural rule commends itself. Only the actual struggles and decisions of history determine the issue. Phyletism may be hurled at both the Greeks and the Arabic-speaking faithful, because both were racial conscious and culturally determined: and it is always the case, where the Holy Ghost does not intervene and subdue and sober, that one phyletism provokes and calls forth another. It redounds to the enduring glory of the Greeks, such as patriarchs Methodius and Hierothius of the last century, that they preserved the priceless jewel of which they were custodians absolutely pure and untarnished, despite the unworthiness of individuals here and there, and that they were big enough to train and raise and sponsor such men as Gerasimos Yārid, Gerasimos Masarra, Gregory Haddād, Alexandros Tahhān, and others, who later became

bishops and patriarchs, and who acquitted themselves most worthily in the office with which they were charged. The credit that is justly due to the Greeks is all the more apparent when one reads the abject slavishness with which the natives attacked their Greek superiors before the Ottoman authorities. Faced with such depths of corruption which recur again and again in the history of Middle Eastern Orthodoxy, one praises the Lord for the incredible wonder with which he has enabled his Church to surmount and survive all human rottenness and folly.

We thus see how concrete Orthodox existence in the Middle East was determined throughout the nineteenth century by a struggle, now and then erupting from hiddenness and subtlety into open crudeness, between the dominant Greek hierarchy and an emerging native hierarchy, supported by a nascent Arab nationalism which was itself in turn, both for good and for bad motives, encouraged if not incited by the Russians. The sees of Alexandria and Jerusalem are still Greek-dominated, while it is difficult to conceive of the ecumenical see as being ever controlled by non-Greeks. Only the see of Antioch, with the election of Meletius in 1899, has been since wholly in the hands of Syrians and Lebanese. And in the see of Jerusalem there are rumblings of uneasiness between Greeks and Arabs, muffled and mitigated by the state of relative helplessness and lethargy in which Orthodoxy finds itself in Jordan and Israel.

Orthodoxy in the Middle East lives in a Muslim world. It has had intimate relations with Russian Orthodoxy and Russian culture. It has been in daily creative contact with Roman Catholicism. The Protestants descended upon it in the nineteenth century, and it has had to react and adjust to them. The Western powers have had separate policies in the Middle East, often conflicting with one another, and almost always at variance with Russian policy, whether Tsarist or Soviet; this whole tangle, in relation both to the Ottoman Empire and to the successor states after the decline and fall of this empire, constitutes what is called the Eastern Question, and Orthodoxy had to accommodate itself to the changing exigencies of this Question. Jealousies and quarrels have not been absent from the relations subsisting between the four Orthodox sees. And the Greeks have had their own cultural-political problems with the non-Greek populations of the Middle East, and there has been real tension between the dominant Greek clergy and the non-Greek faithful natives, certainly in the see of Antioch and to a lesser extent in the sees of Alexandria and Jerusalem. All these constitute what we have called "the external determinants of Orthodoxy in the Middle East". The Orthodox Church has lived and struggled and survived under the external determination of these seven factors.

Having ascertained “the external environment” of this Church, we now ask: what is this Church in itself? What is *it* that is so externally determined? A thing is principally its own being, *and then* it enters into and undergoes all sorts of relations with others. Nothing that is not something in itself can have any relations with anything. It is only because Orthodoxy is already something in itself that one can speak of the Muslim world, the Russian world, the Catholic world, the Protestant world, the Western world, and the Greek world, as variously bearing upon *it*, and of troubled or smooth relations prevailing between *its* four sees. What, then, is this something-in-itself which we call the Orthodox Church in the Middle East? What is it made up of, what is its life, what are its problems, what are the challenges that face it, what are its prospects? The following tabulation explains itself.

*The Orthodox Church in the Middle East*

1. Sees	Istanbul (Constantinople)	Alexandria (data relate to Egypt only)	Antioch (actual seat in Damascus)	Jerusalem
2. Patriarchs (July 1965)	Athenagoras I	Christophorus II	Theodosius VI	Benedictus I
3. Bishops	16 6 titular	5	12 3 titular	11 4 titular
4. Archimand- rites, priests and deacons	61	41	25 archimandrites 485 priests 10 deacons	60
5. Churches	89	55	500	120
6. Number of faithful	45,000	35,000	450,000	70,000
7. Number of faithful c. 1920	2,500,000	250,000	450,000	50,000
8. Monasteries and convents	8	3	19	45 mostly deserted
9. Monks and nuns	10	5	10 monks 90 nuns	50 Greek monks, Brotherhood of the Holy Sepul- chre 50 Russian and other nuns in 3 convents, on the Mount of Olives, at Geth- semane and at Bethany 17 monks, of dif- ferent national- ities, mostly old, in the Monas- tery of Mār Saba



*The Orthodox Church in the Middle East (cont.)*

	Istanbul	Alexandria	Antioch	Jerusalem
10. Sources of income	Property, Greek government, Greek Orthodox in America, World Council of Churches, gifts, and religious services	Property, Greek government, gifts, and religious services	Property, Russian Church, Greek government, Lebanese government, religious services, gifts, Orthodox Church in America, and possibly World Council of Churches	Property, Greek government, pilgrims, gifts, and religious services
11. Income of clergy	Salaries, services	Salaries, services	Salaries for city clergy and for most village priests, services, personal property	Salaries, teaching, services, personal property
12. Degree of education of clergy	Fairly high, every clergyman has some theological degree	10% theological degree	<div> <div>Theo- Uni-</div> <div>logic- ver-</div> <div>al sity</div> <div>degree degree</div> </div> <div> <div>Bishops 50% 15%</div> <div>Archimandrites 50% 5%</div> <div>Deacons 20% 0%</div> <div>Monks and nuns 0% 1%</div> <div>Priests 0% 0%</div> </div>	8% theological degree 10% some university education
13. Schools	1 theological 7 secondary 23 elementary	10 secondary and elementary	12 secondary 25 elementary	10 secondary 30 elementary
14. Societies and clubs	57	150	200	25
15. Orphanages	1	10	10	Undetermined number
16. Hospitals and clinics	1 hospital	10	1 hospital 5 clinics	1 clinic
17. Homes for aged and disabled	1	4	3	1
18. Services in every church	4 Liturgies weekly 2 services daily	3 weekly plus feast days	In city Cathedral, at least 1 Liturgy and 1 service daily; for some of other churches, 2 Liturgies and 1 service weekly; for all, Sundays plus feast days	Churches in Holy Places, Liturgy and service daily; as a rule, 3 weekly plus feast days

*The Orthodox Church in the Middle East (cont.)*

	Istanbul	Alexandria	Antioch	Jerusalem
19. % of faithful attending services	25 to 30	10 to 15	At most 10	At most 10
20. Age distribution of those attending services	Undetermined	Undetermined	50% above age 40 30% between age 20 and 40 20% under age 20	60% above age 40 30% between age 20 and 40 10% under age 20
21. Confession and communion	90% of faithful at least once a year	80% of faithful at least once a year	50% of faithful at least once a year	50% of faithful at least once a year
22. Sunday schools	40 schools	Several thousand students	30 schools, 3,500 students; in Syria and parts of Lebanon religion also is taught in non-confessional schools	1,500 students
23. Bible and other religious reading	Very few	Very few	Very few, but on the increase	Very few
24. Baptisms	All Orthodox children are baptized	All Orthodox children are baptized	All Orthodox children are baptized	All Orthodox children are baptized
25. Marriage of Orthodox in other than Orthodox Church	0% of marriages	0% of marriages among Greeks, 15% among non-Greeks	4% of marriages	6% of marriages
26. Converts to Orthodoxy	Very few; not for religious reasons but because they marry Orthodox	Very few; not for religious reasons but because they marry Orthodox	Very few; not for religious reasons but because they marry Orthodox	Very few; not for religious reasons but because they marry Orthodox
27. Converts from Orthodoxy	Very few, mostly for marriage reasons	Very few, mostly for marriage reasons	Very few, for marriage reasons, or under non-Orthodox educational influence, or through proselytizing	Very few, for marriage reasons, or under non-Orthodox educational influence, or through proselytizing
28. Social classes of faithful	Mostly middle class; good standard of living	Rich and middle class, richer than in sees of Antioch and Jerusalem	A few rich both in city and country; majority in city middle class; in country almost wholly peasants and labourers but relatively with a decent standard of living	A few rich both in city and country; majority in city middle class; in country almost wholly peasants and labourers but relatively with a decent standard of living

*The Orthodox Church in the Middle East (cont.)*

	Istanbul	Alexandria	Antioch	Jerusalem
29. Education and culture	Above average in Turkey; in intimate touch with European culture	Above average in Egypt; in intimate touch with European culture	At least as advanced as any other native group; part of local culture; in touch with Western culture, especially in Lebanon	Above average; part of local culture; in touch with Western culture
30. Political orientation	Greeks, fully Greek in sympathies	Greeks, fully Greek in sympathies; Lebanese and Syrians, somewhat ambivalent; played important role in economic development and in intellectual and literary revival	Nationalists; played a leading part in Arab, Syrian and Lebanese awakening	Nationalists; played active part in political awakening

A few comments are called for.

These data have been difficult to compile. Reliable statistics on some of these matters do not exist. When you ask authoritative people to supply you with information, they fumble, either because they do not know (and if they do not know, then nobody else does), or because they are ashamed of what they know or afraid of disclosing it to you. Some think that the whole business of scientific investigation is a form of spying. I combined three methods: reliance on direct personal knowledge; the use of available published material; and gathering information through a questionnaire. I put in the hands of a score of authoritative people in a position to know a questionnaire of fifty items. I then tried to reconcile their answers in the light of what I know and what is published, and by checking with others who know. The result is the information tabulated above. Although future research will doubtless refine these data further, I believe their margin of error is negligible for the purposes of this study. Moreover, the Middle Eastern scene, as is evident, is changing rapidly, so that much of any further refinement will only mean that the objective situation has itself in the meantime changed.

The bishops under Istanbul refer only to those who live in the Middle East; in addition, there are a score or more bishops under Constantinople's jurisdiction with dioceses in Europe or the Western Hemisphere or Australia and New Zealand. Similarly, the bishops under Antioch do not include the four bishops under the jurisdiction of that see whose dioceses are in the Western Hemisphere.

There are, then, only 600,000 Orthodox in the Middle East. This is about one-half of one per cent of the total population of the region, Christian and Muslim, and about ten per cent of the Christian population. The Orthodox of the Middle East are reduced today to about one-fifth of what they were half a century ago. We are therefore before what I might call "the phenomenon of the squeeze". This phenomenon manifests itself in two ways: the Orthodox have been squeezed, outwardly into Greece and into wherever they have been able to immigrate, and inwardly for the most part into Lebanon. The Orthodox immigration into Lebanon is part of the general Christian emigration from Turkey, Egypt, Syria and Israel. And even Lebanon is treated by many of these Christians as only a stopping station on their way out. The virtual liquidation of Orthodoxy in Turkey and Egypt is more a cultural-political phenomenon than a religious one, as the Orthodox in these two countries were overwhelmingly Greek, while the Orthodox of the sees of Antioch and Jerusalem belonged almost wholly to the indigenous population. The natural increase in the Orthodox population in these two sees during the last half a century was certainly comparable to that of any other segment of the population; this means that we can consider that during the last fifty years the Orthodox population was doubled; this increase does not appear in items 6 and 7 in the tabulation above because it was all absorbed by Orthodox emigration overseas, principally to North and South America. This emigration is part of the general "phenomenon of the squeeze". Orthodoxy will never be wholly squeezed out of Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Israel, because it antedated and survived Islam, because it has lived with Islam for centuries and knows it inwardly very well, because it is existentially and historically thoroughly rooted in the soil and blood of the country, and in Arab culture and the Arabic language (e.g. the liturgy is all in Arabic), and because Orthodox leaders and thinkers have played and are playing an important role in economic, political, cultural and intellectual fairs. The see of Antioch is the irreducible and immovable bastion of Orthodox in the Middle East. This fact is of the greatest possible significance, not only for the future of Orthodoxy in this region, but at once for the future of Muslim-Christian relations and, in view of Orthodoxy's special historical relations to the Russian Church, the future of the Pan-Orthodox movement and the ecumenical Christian movement in general.



With the phenomenon of the demographic squeeze there has been also an economic, social and political squeeze. In Turkey and Egypt, where Orthodoxy has been physically virtually liquidated, all the affluence that characterized Orthodox life forty or fifty years ago, in Izmir, in Istanbul, in Alexandria, in Cairo, is now gone, and therewith Orthodox social and political influence. But even where Orthodox remain, in Beirut, in Jerusalem, in Amman, in Damascus, in Aleppo, their former wealth and position have been markedly reduced. Still, the Orthodox Church in the Middle East, both as hierarchy and people, is a rich church. On the whole, the Orthodox people are well to do, and some of them are very rich; nor is there really abject poverty among them. Church property (*waqf*) is extensive, but it has not been properly administered or exploited. With scientific planning and upright management, the revenue of the Church from its own property could increase many times. But all these prospects would come to nought if the present socializing and nationalizing tendencies in the Middle East should also extend to Church property. Then the Church would be reduced materially to the destitute state to which it has been reduced in eastern Europe. Concerning Russian Church assistance to the see of Antioch, this takes the form mostly of gifts and payment of expenses of the clergy and some of the laity who study in Russia. While this assistance has not been substantial (except for the complete fitting out of the Orthodox hospital in Beirut), and while it is precarious and sporadic, I am sure it will continue, and may even increase. On the whole, the clergy, despite their grumbling, enjoy a higher standard of living than the average standard of their flock. Greater revenue from expanded judicious exploitation of Church property would not only benefit the clergy further; it would enable the Church to renovate churches, build new ones, open new schools, improve existing ones, undertake new projects of publication, found new intellectual and spiritual centres, and sponsor a possible revival of iconography and music.

That in the sees of Antioch and Jerusalem at most ten per cent of the faithful attend religious services on the average at any given time is a point to ponder. This certainly represents a drop from conditions obtaining a generation or two ago. The cause of this drop is partly the modern secular spirit which has also to some extent infected the Middle East, partly the greater economic and social demands upon parents to maintain a steadily rising standard of living for their family. If you ask those who do not attend regular eucharistic services in Europe about the state of their faith, you will find that most of them simply do not believe. This is not the case with those who do not attend the Divine Liturgy in the Middle East. They will emphatically tell you that they are Orthodox believers despite their non-attendance; they were all baptized in the Church, the married among them were all married in the Church, and all of them expect to die in it; and they regularly attend baptismal, marriage and funeral services. All this is not true of those who are not churchgoers in the West. Church attendance is some kind of an indicator, but in the Middle East

it is not an accurate measure of the state of faith. Among the Catholic population the percentage who attend religious services is much higher. While it does not follow from this that there is greater sanctity among the Catholics than among the Orthodox, I believe it is most important for a man, whatever his state of sin or sanctity, to present himself before the Lord in the Church as often as he can, whether to beseech his mercy or simply and humbly and self-forgetfully to adore his truth and his beauty. This is also most important for the honour of the Lord and the integrity of His body the Church. There is in addition in the case of the Orthodox Liturgy such wealth and depth of spirit, and such incomparable drama, that no man who has any taste for these things can wilfully afford to miss this wonderful experience. Thanks to the Orthodox Youth Movement and to other causes, the number of young men and women who believe and pray and regularly attend religious services is annually on the increase.

Conversion from Islam to any form of Christianity is virtually unknown. Because of the enormous doctrinal and social hostility to such conversion, the very few known cases of converts from Islam have been most remarkable, alike in the depth of their conviction, in the clarity of their mind as to what it is all about, and in the intensity of their love for their fellow men. They have put many born Christians to shame. Not is there any real conversion from Christianity to Islam based on conviction. The lines between the Christian communions have also been frozen: the uniate movement and the Protestant proselytizing movement, both aimed at Orthodoxy, have now practically spent themselves. There is therefore no fluidity, no movement, between the religions and between the Christian confessions in the Middle East. There is of course perpetual mutual determination of mind and manner and attitude, but there is no change of social-political-religious identification, no change of allegiance, even where (perhaps precisely because) the allegiance has ceased to have any genuine, inner, spiritual meaning. In the Middle East everybody is publicly tagged with his religion (in most instances, his very name betrays his religious affiliation); with the advent of Islam, the tags were changed on a vast scale; with the uniate movement of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and early nineteenth, there was some change of tags at the expense of Orthodoxy; and with the coming of the Protestant missions another slight shift occurred, again at the expense of Orthodoxy. The tags now are almost wholly fixed, nor does there appear any prospect for a new shuffling of them. People in the Middle East change their dress, their manners, their political and social ideas, their parties, their classes, their political masters, even some of their beliefs, but not their religion. This is a most significant fact. It means that religion is the chief historical product of the Middle East, of any universal-human significance; that is why everybody is publicly tagged with it. But it means also that the Middle East has ceased to be creative, that it is no longer interested in propagating its greatest creation, that the great products of the spirit which move men on their deepest level

are no longer coming from it. Thus it cannot deny its greatest (possibly its only) product, for if it did it would deny itself, it would have nothing else to affirm about itself, and the very roots of its own self-confidence would then wither away. That is why it pertinaciously clings to religion and tags everybody with it. On the other hand, it is invaded from every side by modernism, scientism, socialism, nationalism, industrialism, and a host of other forces, and it is these--none of its own making--that produce movement and fluidity among its ranks. Religious demarcations are frozen but not obliterated in the Middle East, because there are mighty competitors to religion which take people's mind completely off the greatest product of their heritage.

Education among the Orthodox in the Middle East is distinctly above the average. They are in intimate touch with Western thought and culture, without--in the case of the non-Greeks--losing any of their organic rootedness in the indigenous culture. One can name a score of Orthodox thinkers who made a deep mark upon literary, intellectual and political developments in Egypt, Lebanon and Syria over the last three generations. Proportionately to the total Orthodox population, this group of thinkers perhaps stands out unique among all confessions. Among the dead, the following names may be mentioned: Adīb Ishāq, Jurjī Zaydān, Farah Antūn, Ilyā Abū Mādī, Antūn Sa'āda [Antoun Saadeh], Īsā Iskandar al-Ma'lūf, and Asad Rustum. Mikhā'll Nu'ayma [Mikhail Na'ımy] is perhaps the greatest living literary figure in the entire Arab world, and Georges Shihāda [Georges Shehadeh], a playwright in French, has had some of his plays performed in Germany, Paris and the United States. As to the clergy, in Constantinople their theological formation is high, but in the other three sees it is very spotty. The village priests have no theological or university education; all that can be said of them is they are literate, and if they have a little theological sophistication, they acquired it, not formally, but as it were by nature and instinct, and from the intimations of the liturgy which they know by heart. There is room for immense reforms here. In the matter of university and theological training, there is a sharp hiatus between the younger and older bishops and deacons. It is hoped that when the new generation takes over in ten or twenty years, Orthodoxy at least in the see of Antioch, which, as we saw, is the decisive see, will present a new face to the world.

It is not an accident that some of the principal nationalist leaders, in the realm both of theory and political action, and both in the "Syrian" as well as the wider "Arab" sense of nationalism, have been Orthodox. This is due to Orthodoxy's deep indigenous roots. Soil, land, people, language, community and tradition are decisive in Orthodoxy. Antūn Sa'āda and Michel 'Aflaq are the most prominent names that may be mentioned. Both developed nationalist philosophies, the first on a "Syrian", the second on an "Arab", basis; and both founded, organized and led political parties. And while Sa'āda's party attempted



unsuccessfully at least twice to seize power, 'Aflaq's **Ba'th** party rules Syria today. The fact that in some of the foundations of their thought they are diametrically opposed to each other, although perhaps they are equally sincere, is not inconsistent with the fact that their Orthodox background probably played a decisive part in the formation of their minds, no matter how strangely and obscurely. Nationalism, whether Syrian or Arab, hankers back to something more natural and more inclusive than religion; it has the effect, at least in theory, equalizing between Muslim and Christian, and this is a great relief to both: to the Christian, because he thereby overcomes his minority status; and to the Muslim, because he is impressed by the relative superiority of the Western world which is identified in his mind with Christianity, and because in working with his Christian brother on a non-religious basis, the religious irritant is thereby removed. The examination of this whole theme of the political and nationalist implications of Orthodoxy in the Middle East calls for a separate and much deeper treatment.

The iconography is all Byzantine. The Syrian school is decadent and the good icons come from Greece or Russia. The treasure of old icons throughout the land has suffered many depredations. The music is all Greek, or Greek-based, even where the liturgy is sung in Arabic. A veritable revolution has been accomplished by Mitri 'I-Murr who perfected the Arabic text so as to fit exactly the Greek tunes.

Three special Orthodox institutions of world renown can only be mentioned here: Mount Athos under the jurisdiction of the ecumenical patriarch, the Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, and the autonomous Monastery of St Catherine in Mount Sinai. Athos and Sinai contain ancient manuscripts and icons of great value.

The Orthodox in North and South America who trace their origins to the Middle East have flourishing churches under able bishops. Their number is of the order of 300,000 and their churches are at least 150. Spiritually, materially, and from the point of view of active participation in the life of the Church, this community is far superior to what obtains in the Middle East. Although these churches fall under the jurisdiction of Antioch, it appears that Orthodoxy in America is destined to constitute an autocephalous Church.

The Orthodox Youth Movement is one of the principal hopes of the Church. It was founded in 1942 by two young Lebanese Orthodox, Albert Lahhām and Georges Khidr [Georges Khodr], and was later joined by a similar group founded at about the same time in al-Lādhiqiyya (Latakia), Syria, by Marcel Murgus [Matcel Morcos] and Gabriel Sa'āda [Gabriel Saadé]. Educated in Catholic schools and religious by nature, these men felt that there was a peculiar original spirituality in Orthodoxy which was in danger of being lost if Orthodoxy were completely romanized or westernized. They therefore sought in total self-

abandon to resuscitate Orthodoxy from within, both in their own lives and in the life of the Church. The historical development of this vision reveals the authentic workings of the Holy Ghost. Today the influence of this Movement is felt among all Orthodox in the see of Antioch. One of the founders of the Movement, now Father Khidr, helped also to launch the idea of Syndesmos, the World Organization of Orthodox Youth Movements, in 1953; and the other founder, Maitre Lahhām, was elected president of Syndesmos (whose headquarters are now in Beirut) in 1964. Murqus is now the superior of the monastic community of Dayr al-Harf. A dozen clergy, including three bishops, are either members of the Movement or have been deeply touched by it. It inspired two monastic communities, one of nuns at Dayr Mār Ya'qūb and one of monks at Dayr al-Harf, both in Lebanon.<sup>6</sup>

One can only mention here the meeting of Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras I and Pope Paul VI in Jerusalem in January 1964.<sup>7</sup> For Middle Eastern Orthodoxy this was most historic. It was preceded and followed by many exchanges of visits and letters between Constantinople and Rome. The relevant addresses and documents are published in *Osservatore Romano*. They make remarkable reading. A wholly new spirit of dialogue and openness prevails between Orthodoxy and Catholicism today. For years before Orthodoxy had been “meeting” and actively co-operating with Protestantism at the World Council of Churches. This is a wonderful ecumenical age, although only the Holy Ghost knows where it will lead in the end. Nor need we be too curious about this. Our duty is never to relent in loving, and praying, and forgiving, and working, and expecting miracles.

Whatever the past and the present, unless there is a real future, all is vain. Whatever the past and the present, if the future is only a repetition of the past and present, all is vain too. Being is the hope and lure and call of a real, possible, *better* future. Being is working hard in the present with whatever can be salvaged from the past for the sake of a future closer and nearer to God. Being is self-dedication in love with the faith and the hope that what has been and is being missed of the fulness of life which is God will somehow be made up for in a real future. He cannot live who has no such hope, and he alone knows the joy and creativity of the spirit whom God has granted such a hope, calmly, soberly, really, and without illusion.

At the heart of every Orthodox in the Middle East is the feeling that things cannot continue as they have been. Orthodoxy is doomed unless it can realistically look forward to a better future. Quantitatively, it has been reduced to one-fifth of what it was half a

6 For an account of this important fresh breeze of the Holy Ghost, see *Orthodoxy, A Pan-Orthodox Symposium*, ed. The Brotherhood of Theologians “ZOE”, Athens, 1964, pp. 265-79, by Father Khidr; and *Syndesmos* (November, 1958), pp. 10-13, by the Superior of the Dayr al-Harf Monastic Community.

7 Since then there has been a mutual lifting of excommunications between Rome and Constantinople: the Pope and the Ecumenical Patriarch met again in Istanbul in July 1967, and the Patriarch visited Rome in October 1967 to return the Pope's two visits to the Near East.

century ago. Qualitatively, the bishops of the Holy Synod of at least one see physically hit and wounded each other in a recent session, and one taction sued the other before the civil authorities; the amount of intrigue and gossip that goes on is incredible; fasting, communion, church attendance, taking part in all the life of the Church, were much more widespread and serious fifty years ago than they are today; and while sanctity, morality and faith among the Orthodox are certainly not in worse shape than among the Catholics, the clergy of the former are on the whole much shabbier theologically and educationally than the clergy of the latter. This state of affairs cannot go on. One loves God, adores the liturgy, lives the life of the Church, is certain that Jesus Christ is everything, listens to the Holy Ghost, honours the Virgin, but one is not edified by what one sees in his Church. One is pained and discouraged.

In another essay,<sup>8</sup> I set forth what I considered to be the tasks facing the Christians of the Middle East if they are to move from the merely preservative function which they have been performing so admirably for centuries to something more creative. Everything I said there applies to the Orthodox Church. Here I want to sharpen a few matters.

The future of Orthodoxy in the Middle East appears to depend for the most part on the see of Antioch. The other three sees have their own formidable problems. One prays that they hold out under all their trials. The position of Athenagoras of Constantinople is especially critical. All men of good will, Orthodox and non-Orthodox, Christian and non-Christian, should see that only good can come out of strengthening his hands. All men therefore should support him and pray for the lengthening of his days. Equally critical is the question whether it is in the design of God to send a successor to Athenagoras (he is getting along in years) on this greatest of all Orthodox thrones of the stature of this good and incomparable man. In this ecumenical age, Constantinople alone can guide and lead and moderate. not only among the Orthodox but in their relations to the Catholics and Protestants as well.

The Orthodox Church is called upon to identify itself wholly with the indigenous culture. It must suffer all the stresses and problems of this culture from within. There can be no question about its not taking orders, politically, socially, and even culturally, from without. It is wholly native, wholly rooted in the soil and spirit of the land. In a nationalist epoch, the Orthodox can be politically nationalist to the core. There is every indication that the Middle East is heading towards a great renaissance; the very formidableness and intensity of its problems prove this. The Orthodox Church and the Orthodox people should be joyously and freely and confidently at the very forefront of every creativity and participation in the coming age, no matter at what cost and with what measure of suffering. God alone calls and God disallows, but no other spiritual agency in the Middle East is more humanly fit for this task.

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8 M. Searle Bates and Wilhelm Pauck (eds.), *The Prospects of Christianity throughout the World* (New York, Scribner's, 1964), chapter 5, "The Near East", pp. 83-103.

Some kind of a dialogue with Islam is going to be opened. The Pope presaged that, and the ripening of intellectual and spiritual conditions will conduce to it. This is a very difficult and serious matter. Three distinct levels ought to be discriminated: all that science and reason can reveal to Muslim and Christian equally; all that Islam and Christianity as Abrahamic religions have in common about the nature of the one and transcendent God and the nature of man; and the areas of faith and doctrine in which they frankly differ from each other. Nothing but good can come from complete clarity on all three matters. Both the Orthodox Church, co-existing with Islam for centuries and knowing it from within, and Orthodox thinkers, sharing with their Muslim brethren every economic, political, social and intellectual concern, ought to be in a position to create an atmosphere of complete mutual trust and eager search for the truth in all these realms. Already attempts towards that end are being made in Lebanon. God alone calls and God disallows, but it appears that the Orthodox community is best suited to undertake this historic task.

The non-Chalcedonian Churches of the Middle East have an honourable and integral place in the final harmony of the Church Universal. The first step appears to be a genuine adjustment with the Orthodox Church. The conversations that took place in August 1964 in Aarhus, Denmark, and the Addis Ababa conference of January 1965 were in the nature of preliminary explorations of this matter. The spirit prevailing on all sides is excellent. The point is to be absolutely clear on the Christological issue which divided the Christian world at Chalcedon in 451. Precisely because the Orthodox Church is exactly as bound by the definitions of Chalcedon as the Catholic Church, the Orthodox Church cannot proceed with any adjustment on this matter with the non-Chalcedonian Churches without agreement with Rome. God alone calls and God disallows, but the Orthodox Church appears to be in a unique position to bring together the entire Eastern family of Churches into a new unity of faith and love, on the basis of the truth, in preparation for the great day of universal Church unity ahead.

It is not difficult to dream, but hope and prayer have at times the character of dreaming. The Greeks and the Russians did not always see eye to eye with each other. The Church of Antioch is on good terms with both. Its very poverty, its very desolateness, its glorious name, the fact that it is rooted in the very existential soil from which our Lord sprang, all this may enable it some day to play an integrating role in the Pan-Orthodox world. There has been a faint glimmer of this in recent Pan-Orthodox gatherings. God alone calls and God disallows, but I pray that there be in the divine economy a deeper meaning to the reduction of Orthodoxy in the Middle East to the Church of Antioch than appears on the surface.

Again, the Orthodox of the see of Antioch have had more intimate contacts—indeed have wrestled more—with the Roman Catholics than any other Orthodox, certainly than the Greeks and Russians. The united experience belongs to their background more than

to any other background. They are neither afraid of the Catholics nor by now are they prejudiced against them. Who knows therefore what active role God may be holding in store for them, despite their insignificance and despite their poverty, in the inevitable ecumenical confrontation between Orthodox and Catholics in the future? God alone calls and God disallows, but one nevertheless is not prevented from dreaming and hoping and praying that the Orthodox of the Middle East be more “understanding” ecumenically than other Orthodox, never of course at the expense of the truth or of their abiding solidarity with their Orthodox brethren all over the world.

Nor can their experience with Protestantism be in the eyes of God altogether a waste. The Protestant thrust fell upon them more heavily than upon any other community. Add to this the emigration of many of them to America and the influence of the American schools and especially of the American University of Beitut upon them (among the Christians who attend this University, the Orthodox constitute by far the largest bloc), and the result is a distinct Protestant spirit impregnating their soul. By right, every Christian experience everywhere will sooner or later establish for itself some foothold in the Middle East, for this is the one region in the whole universe where there can be no monopoly for any group counted on the Cross of Christ. God alone calls and God disallows, but the greater “understanding” which the Orthodox have acquired of Protestantism and the Protestant spirit may, despite their poverty and despite their insignificance, prepare them for some role in the great ecumenical feast of the future.

The Orthodox should rediscover and relive their wonderful tradition. How much will be left of Christianity if you remove the witness and conviction and vision of the early Greek Fathers of the Church? It is enough for the Orthodox to realize who St John Chrysostom and St John of Damascus were and what they believed and did. It is enough for them to contemplate the liturgy. It is enough to appreciate the monasticism and asceticism and anchoritism of the golden days. Here is a wealth of suffering and love which can transform the whole world. God alone calls and God disallows, but the mere fact that a thing was possible once proves that it is not impossible again.

The Orthodox today are unworthy of their possibilities. Perhaps it is sin of me to reason in this fashion, for certainly “God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham”. This we cannot control. But so far as the human intellect can go, I do not see how anything I have been dreaming here is going to come about tomorrow, or even the day after. The moral and venal corruption, the spiritual degeneracy, the empty bragging, the absence of a genuine sense of responsibility, the indifference to wonderful opportunities missed, the squabbling and backbiting that goes on, the false sense of satisfaction, the complete neglect

of pastoral care, the political, social and ideological forces overwhelming the soul, the fear and distractedness, the escapism and flight from the truth—all this is humanly too much for honest hope, as distinct from dreaming and hoping and praying in general, to take root and develop. I do not say that God cannot overcome these things; but these things are precisely the things He must overcome. And if He does not intervene and the situation continues as it has been, many Orthodox will turn to uniatism or Protestantism or communism in sheer disgust and rebellion. It is entirely possible that the heyday of uniatism and Protestantism is not behind us.

A theological seminary at the Belmond Monastery in North Lebanon is absolutely needed and will considerably help. When the half a dozen younger clergy, who constitute part of the hope of the Church, come to positions of real responsibility, a new day may dawn upon us. The Orthodox Youth Movement has been a great leaven, but lately it appears to have slumped and wilted. The challenge is simply too much for it and it must shake itself out of its amateurishness and become tenfold more serious. It can still do wonders. The contemplative seeds at Dayr al-Harf and Dayr Mār Ya'qūb are great seminal hopes for the future. Fifty such contemplatives are needed, and then there will be a flood of grace and spirit. And the light should shine as well in the home and the parish, in the school and market place, in the office and bedroom, in the work of art and in the solitude of the soul. Something more than monastic contemplation therefore is needed in this utterly parched scene, something akin to the Catholic *Opus Dei*, where a group of absolutely dedicated men and women are sworn to invade the whole of human life, under God and for his glory alone. Sainthood is not to be achieved in monasteries alone; the question today is whether an engineer, a tennis player, a politician, an actress, a newspaperman, a housewife, a farmer a merchant, can be a saint, recognized as such and canonized by the Church itself. Let there be fifty monastic contemplatives joined to fifty active ones, and you have the council of one hundred who will transform the entire Middle East.

I wish to close with two translations from the Arabic literature of the Orthodox Youth Movement, one a simple address by the Father Superior of the new Monastic Order of Dayr al-Harf made on the occasion of four monks taking their First Vow, and the other a prayer by a Greek Orthodox priest. They are redolent of the best in classical Antiochian spirituality.

We thank God who hath called us unto Himself and confirmed us in the way of His patience unto the end. We thank Him because He hath overlooked our weaknesses and accepted and continues to accept us as we are. We thank Him because He is the ever-present cause of our faithfulness to Him.

As we take the First Vow we become consecrated to God for the rest of our life. We are pledged to put aside through His grace the pleasures of the world and to seek and pray for Him always.

We know we are unworthy of this wonderful grace; we know that the way ahead suits neither our nature nor our powers; we know we shall stumble on the way. But God visits His slaves, whoever they are, and the imperfection of those who surrender to Him he is able to heal.

Have we chosen a strange way by separating ourselves from others? But God Himself brought us to this strange and unknown way, and no doubt He is the author of the plan. And the Holy Church our mother hath approved it from the beginning, and it is she, in the person of his Lordship our Venerable Father and Bishop, who clearly first encouraged us and tended our early steps...

The Church yearns in us all for the mercy of her Lord and needs to be filled with His grace.

In our opaque world the Church needs members who long for the face of the Lord above everything desired and longed for.

From the heart of the beloved Church of Antioch we draw near to the Lord, and there before Him we confess our sins, and through patience, blood and the ascetic life we beseech the dew of His great mercy and the shining of His love and light.

The Church is the bride of the Lord. How can she therefore forget her love and His love?...

The Church is the beloved bride of Christ. How can she therefore not seek Him with fervour? How can she not await His coming in the night, with the lamps burning strong and bright, to receive His salvation, and His resurrection in its dazzling light?

Will the Lord accept our burnt offering? Will He grant us to rise above ourselves and cleanse our hearts? Will He make our whole life a petition, pure and undefiled, in the mouth of the Church our Mother, bearing to Him with fidelity the longing of her heart?...<sup>9</sup>

I thank Thee O God for Thou hast visited me in my anxiety and sought me in my despair. Thou hast come down to the abyss and I ceased to feel that I am in it. In it Thou hast come to me with a new vision, taking off from Thy face the veil of my sin. Thou hast deigned to exchange. Thy love with mine, and when Thou coveredst me with forgiveness, it was as one intoxicated though perfectly sober that I met Thee. And before Thy face thou liftedst me a brother beloved.

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9 The Publication of the Monastery of St George at Dayr al-Harf (*Nashrat Dayr Mār Jirjis al-Harf*), no.14 (December 1962), pp. 1-2.



O Thou my companion in the sorest of trials and my mate in the sweetness of yearning. O Thou who when temptation reaches its utmost bounds causest Thy face to shine upon me, with tenderness and compassion. O Thou who only after I meet Thee I come out of my distress, to know Thee more and more O Thou who in my choking and darkness makest Thy way Thyself to me. And as I behold Thee. Thou becomest my hope, and I know that I am then beyond death, having climbed the mount where Thou wast transfigured.

This is Thy story with me day after day. Thou hast thus become a law and a norm unto me and Thy ways with mankind became perfectly clear. I then reconciled myself to what became only too familiar to me. I learned that I am powerless to save myself, but Thou acceptest me in my weakness though this weakness ever remains the same. This is what Thou hast willed from the beginning, and this is how Thou lovest. Thy mercy hath so amazed me that I spend all my life between one fall and another singing praises about it.

I sing these praises because Thou transformest my stumbling always to meditating on why I did not walk in Thy statutes. And so love captivates me anew; so I penetrate to the awful depths of my sin; so my misery and Thy mercy disclose themselves equally to me; and so I am assured, moment by moment, in victory and in defeat, in doubt and in certainty, that Thy dealings with me are dealings of compassion.<sup>10</sup>

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10 *al-Nūr*, 15 May 1963, p.138. Prayer by Archimandrite George Khidr.