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The Eastern Christians and Their Churches

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FORMATION OF THE SEVEN EASTERN CHURCH TRADITIONS

Eastern Churches?

What are the Eastern Christian Churches? What do we mean by “Eastern”? After all, the world is round and any point on earth (except the two poles) happens to be east of somewhere else.

From the first to the seventh centuries Christianity spread throughout the countries around the Mediterranean Sea. The Christian communities and their ways of life that grew up in the eastern half of the Mediterranean Basin –and even farther east beyond the Mediterranean -- are what we call *Eastern Christian Churches*. These Churches developed different *Traditions*, or styles, of Christianity in various places.

The Eastern Churches live by Seven Traditions, or Christian Ways of Life, which developed over the centuries and continue to this day. Many people used to call them “rites,” focusing on the distinctive Liturgy that each Church has. However, the Maronite Tradition, for instance, is more than just the Liturgy. Being Maronite also involves the spirituality, the art, the music, the hierarchy and Church structure, the devotions, the calendar, the theology and discipline – that encompasses the whole Maronite Way of Life, which has been handed down over the centuries. The word “Tradition” is used to name these Ways of Life, meaning not just one particular custom, but all that constitutes the Maronite –or any other – Christian Way of Life.

Sometimes these Traditions developed around major cities, such as Rome, Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem and Constantinople. Other distinctive Traditions of church life also developed in regions, such as Ethiopia, Armenia, and Mesopotamia. Some Traditions grew up, and then later disappeared, as others took their place.

The Coptic Tradition

The largest international city of the eastern Mediterranean in the ancient world was certainly Alexandria. The city was built by Alexander the Great in 332 BC in Egypt, where the Nile River flows into the Mediterranean Sea. It was the most important center of trade and commerce in the area. As the heir to the scholarship and learning of ancient Egypt, Alexandria was a place where historians, theologians, and specialists came to consult. It was also the site of the largest library in the ancient world. When the Roman Empire organized its divisions, Alexandria was one of the most important centers of imperial administration. Alexandria became the center of the *Coptic* Church (“Coptic” being an ancient word for “Egyptian”).

Egypt was conquered by Islamic forces in the seventh century, and little by little Egypt’s Christians became a minority. Their ancient Coptic language slowly disappeared as a spoken language, having been replaced by the Arabic language of their conquerors. The Coptic Christians are still a significant minority in the country, although official government figures appear to underestimate dramatically their numbers. Both the patriarch of the large Coptic Orthodox Church (official Egyptian government figures, about 3,900,000 members) and the patriarch of the Coptic Catholic Church (under 200,000 members) reside in Cairo.

The Antiochene Tradition

Antioch, the modern town of Antakya, Turkey, which was once a great port city, is now a small village several miles inland, located in modern Turkey, not far from the modern border between Turkey and Syria. In ancient times it was a major international city, and the center of all trade in the northeast Mediterranean. It was also a major center of study and learning. The Bible tells us that it was at Antioch that people first coined the term “Christians” to describe those who believe in Jesus Christ (Acts 11:26), and Saint Paul passed through the city several times on his journeys. The Christians of the city, very early in the 100s, had a

clearly organized Church structure, described by Saint Ignatius of Antioch (c. 35-c. 107) in his letters. Among other major figures of the ancient Church, Saint John Chrysostom (c. 347-407) grew up and served for many years as a priest in Antioch. Although the Church in the city itself used Greek for many centuries, the Syriac language spoken in the surrounding countryside (a dialect of Aramaic, Jesus' native tongue) eventually became their dominant language. Antioch became the center of the Antiochene or West Syrian Church.

The Antiochene Church has had a turbulent and difficult history, frequently caught between opposing sides of international conflicts. Most recently, it found itself in the midst of the struggle between the Turkish government and Kurdish insurgents in southeast Turkey, where the ancient monastery of Tur Abdin is one of their most ancient centers. The modern Antiochene Churches are the Syrian (Jacobite) Orthodox Church and the Syrian Catholic Church. The patriarch of the Syrian Orthodox now lives in Damascus, while the Syrian Catholic patriarch resides in Beirut. There are diaspora communities in Western Europe and North America. Together, the Churches have fewer than a half million members worldwide.

The Assyro-Chaldean Tradition

In modern Iraq and the nearby countries, the ancient country of Mesopotamia (Greek for "Between the Rivers") grew up on the banks of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. Christianity spread to this region very early, almost certainly in the first century. They used Syriac from the beginning, and practically all their theology and Liturgy were written in Syriac. Their early centers were at Edessa and Nisibis, but these cities were dangerous because they were along the moving border between the Roman and the Persian Empires. Seleucia-Ctesiphon, south of modern Baghdad, then became for centuries the center of the *Assyro-Chaldean* or *East Syrian* Church. It had a dramatic expansion through Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Tibet, and China up until 13th century, but

Mongol rulers in 14th century set out to annihilate this Church and nearly succeeded.

Like other ancient Christian Churches in the Near East, the Assyrian Church of the East and its Catholic counterpart, the Chaldean Catholic Church, have faced gigantic challenges in the twentieth century. Its ancient homeland in Iraq has become the battleground for larger, well armed communities struggling for domination. The violence of the war in Iraq has driven many thousands of Chaldeans and Assyrians from the country temporarily, but as the violence continues, the exile of many seems to be more and more permanent. There are now substantial Chaldean and Assyrian communities in exile, particularly in Europe and North America. The principal Assyrian patriarch has his see in Chicago and the patriarch of a smaller Assyrian Church resides in Baghdad, Iraq. At this time (spring 2008) the Chaldean patriarch also maintains his presence in Baghdad. Both churches together have between a half million and a million members.

The Armenian Tradition

In the mountains of modern Armenia and eastern Turkey, the Armenian people have lived for thousands of years. The first Christian missionaries probably came from the Assyro-Chaldean Church to their south. But the real conversion of Armenia came by way of contacts with the Greek Church in Cappadocia (modern eastern Turkey). Saint Gregory the Illuminator (c. 240-c. 332) was an Armenian trained in Cappadocia. Returning home to Armenia, he became the first bishop and converted the king and the nation in the early 300s, making Armenia the world's first Christian nation. They had a great flowering of theological writing and translation through the Middle Ages, and many works of ancient Christian writers have come down only by way of Armenian translations. Because they were caught between the large, powerful nations surrounding them, the Armenians often suffered and died for their faith, most disastrously in the genocide of 1915. The *Armenian* Church is quite distinctive in both its tendency to retain very ancient usages (such

as the ancient celebration of Christmas and Epiphany in a single feast), while also adopting many other practices from surrounding Churches.

Although the Armenian kingdom was the first Christian state, for most of its history since that time, the Armenians have been under the control of some neighboring nation. Already in the Middle Ages, a sizeable Armenian diaspora emerged in much of the eastern Mediterranean, especially in what is modern Lebanon. As the Ottoman Empire was collapsing toward the end of World War I, the Armenians were targeted in the first massive genocide of the twentieth century. The Armenian Apostolic (Orthodox) Church, with six million members worldwide, has experienced a revival since the independence of Armenia in 1991. The head of the Church, the Catholicos, has his see at Etchmiadzin, Armenia. The Armenian Catholic Church is very small, fewer than a half million members. Its patriarch resides in Beirut.

The Jerusalem Tradition

The city of Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans in A.D. 70 and all Jews were banished from the new Roman city, Aelia Capitolina, which was built on the ruins of the ancient city. With the legalization of Christianity by the Emperor Constantine in 313, Christians began to make pilgrimages to Jerusalem. Churches were built in the city at the most important Christian sites. At first Jerusalem developed its own distinctive Tradition, sometimes called “hagiopolite” (from the Greek words for “holy city”). The ancient Liturgy in Jerusalem dramatically shaped how most Christian Churches –Eastern and Western—celebrate Holy Week and Easter down to the present. But eventually Jerusalem came under the sway of other Churches and lost its own distinctive Tradition. Today the Eastern Churches in the Holy City follow the Traditions of several Eastern Churches.

The Maronite Tradition

Somewhere in the area of Antioch, Saint Maron originally lived as a hermit in the late 4th century. In time, disciples living near him formed a monastic community, and eventually communities of lay people emerged. Mainly in the 7th century these communities moved to Lebanon and developed their own style of Christian life, forming yet another Syriac-speaking Church. It is the only Eastern Tradition whose members are all in a single Church, the *Maronite* Catholic Church, taking the name of their founder, Saint Maron. The Church continues to have a large presence in Lebanon, but also has a substantial diaspora in Europe, North America, Australia, and elsewhere. Although the Maronite Church has adopted many customs from the Roman Catholic Church, it still retains much of its distinctive ancient Syriac tradition. The Church has over three million members worldwide. The patriarch resides in Bkerke, Lebanon.

The Byzantine Tradition

The Emperor Constantine inaugurated a new capital of the Roman Empire in 330, when he moved the center of the empire from Rome to the old town of Byzantium on the Bosphorus, the straits separating Europe from Asia. Constantine had the city rebuilt and expanded. It was first called simply “New Rome,” but soon became known as “Constantine’s City” or “Constantinople.” It is the modern city of Istanbul, Turkey. As the center of the Roman Empire, it also very quickly became a major center of the Christian Church, marked by a close collaboration (“symphonia”) between the Church and the civil government. In Constantinople—especially in the Great Church of Haghia Sophia—the *Byzantine* Church developed and eventually spread to the Near East, to central Europe and Russia, and to many nations around the world. Christians of the Byzantine Tradition are by far the most numerous, easily outnumbering the Christians of all the other Eastern Traditions combined. It is also the most international, having national Churches and hierarchy on every continent.

The beginnings of the Orthodox Church in Russia and Ukraine are shrouded in mystery. The legend tells that Prince Vladimir sent out emissaries in the late tenth century to visit peoples around him and see what their religions were like. They came back with reports on Islam, Judaism, Roman Catholicism, and Orthodoxy. They said that when they asked to know about Orthodoxy in Constantinople, their hosts brought them to church to see the services. Legend has it that the envoys reported to Vladimir, "...and we knew not whether we were in heaven or on earth. For on earth there is no such splendor or such beauty, and we are at a loss how to describe it. We know only that God dwells there among men, and their service is fairer than the ceremonies of other nations. For we cannot forget that beauty. Every man, after tasting something sweet, is afterward unwilling to accept that which is bitter, and therefore we cannot dwell longer here." So Prince Vladimir and his court were baptized around 988, and Orthodoxy became the state religion. Orthodoxy remained the state religion of Russia until 1917.

The Byzantine Churches and other Eastern Churches suffered two devastating blows in 1453 and 1917. The forces of the Ottoman Turks took the city of Constantinople in 1453 and brought an end to the Christian Empire, which had carried on the traditions of Roman state for over a thousand years. Virtually all of the Christians in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East fell under Muslim control. Christianity was officially tolerated, but only barely. Christians could run no schools and publish no books. They were forbidden to do any organized charitable work. Christians were permitted to hold Church services and nothing more. For anyone to convert to Christianity was a criminal offense that brought the death penalty. Only little by little through the 1800s did these Churches gain, once again, some rights to function as Churches free of the suffocating control of Islam.

In 1917 the Russian Revolution brought to power a radically anti-religious government. Hundreds of thousands of bishops, priests, monks, nuns, and lay people were killed for their faith. What had been a lively Church with a vibrant intellectual life was driven underground. The

Soviet state grudgingly recognized the Church, but most churches and monasteries were closed. The state security organizations infiltrated the clergy and the hierarchy so thoroughly that few people had confidence in their leaders. After World War II, communist governments spread throughout Central Europe, and through much of the twentieth century, Orthodox Churches in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria, Albania, Moldova, and Georgia struggled to survive against enormous odds. Eastern Catholic Churches in almost all these countries were violently suppressed. All of this changed with the dramatic collapse of communism in the early 1990s, but the wounds of that period remain.

The Ethiopic Tradition

Sometime in the late 3rd and early 4th centuries, Christians first arrived in Ethiopia, most likely from ships leaving ports on the Arabian Peninsula. Around the year 330 Saint Frumentius earned the confidence of Emperor Ezana and began the Christianization of the country. Monasteries grew up and became centers of theology and other studies, using the ancient Ge'ez language of Ethiopia. The *Ethiopic* Church is unique in retaining many Jewish usages, such as circumcision, Jewish dietary laws, and a Saturday sabbath. Since the Middle Ages the Ethiopic Church has used a form of the Coptic Liturgy, which may go back much further.

Ethiopia is a poor nation, and the twentieth century was a violent and unstable time. In the 1980s droughts devastated the country and millions died. War with Somalia to the east and the war of independence by Eritrea in the north sapped much of the country's limited wealth and manpower. The violent Marxist government of Mengistu also brought turbulence and confusion. Since the independence of Eritrea from Ethiopia, the Orthodox Church has split with one patriarch in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and another in Asmara, Eritrea. The two Churches together have around 18,000,000 members. The Ethiopian Catholic Church has about 200,000 members in Ethiopia and Eritrea.

The Ancient Christian Traditions of India

Indian Christians believe that Saint Thomas the Apostle traveled to south India and there evangelized the people he met. There is no documentation to prove this, but it is clear now that trade did go back and forth between the Mediterranean and south India even in the Roman period. In time this Church established links with the Assyro-Chaldean Church and took on their Tradition in the state of Kerala in southern India, which is still their homeland, and where most of them still live, historically St. Thomas Christians. The largest group today is known as the *Malabar* Church. In the late 1600s a group of south Indian Christians left the Malabar Church and joined the Antiochene Church, becoming the *Malankara* Church (at present both Oriental Orthodox and Catholic). Both use the Antiochene Tradition.

Today the Malabar and Malankara Christians may number as many as eight million. They are centered in Kerala state in south India. They are also present in other parts of India and in an international diaspora. The largest group belongs to the Malabar Catholic Church with around four million members, whose major archbishop resides at Ernakulam, Kerala. The Malankara Catholic Church has about 300,000 members, with a major archbishop whose See is at Trivandrum, Kerala. The Malankara Orthodox Church, which is divided in two groups, one based in Kottayam and the other in Muvattupuzha, both in Kerala. They claim 2,500,000 members. The Assyrian Church of the East has about 150,000 members and a metropolitan in South India.

These, then, are the Seven basic Traditions of the Eastern Christian Churches.

- A. Coptic Tradition
- B. Antiochene Tradition (also found in the Malankara Church in India)
- C. Assyro-Chaldean Tradition (also found in the Malabar Church in India)
- D. Armenian Tradition
- E. Maronite Tradition

F. Byzantine Tradition

G. Ethiopic Tradition

Three of the Traditions — Antiochene, Assyro-Chaldean, and Maronite — have all used the Syriac language, a dialect of Aramaic, Jesus' native language. Despite divisions on theological issues, these three Churches had a certain amount of borrowing back and forth. They have substantial differences, but a number of underlying similarities remain.

It is important to understand that these seven Traditions, or Christian Ways of Life, are the pattern for Eastern Christians. In many ways, they are more important than the later division into various Churches. For instance, Armenian Christians will have a lot in common whether they are members of the Armenian Apostolic Church or members of the Armenian Catholic Church. Their Armenian Tradition outlines their basic Christian Way of Life. In a similar way, there are many Churches that follow the Byzantine Tradition. Just a few are the Russian Orthodox Church, the Greek Orthodox Church, the Romanian Orthodox Church, the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church, the Romanian Greek-Catholic Church, and the Ruthenian Byzantine Catholic Church. All of these Churches and dozens of others follow the Byzantine Tradition and their spiritual ways of life are extremely similar, if not identical. That some are Catholic and some are Orthodox — meaning not in communion with the pope and the Catholic Churches — is not apparent in their basic way of life. In fact, one would have a hard time telling whether a Ukrainian Church were Catholic or Orthodox without first having checked the signpost outside.

SEPARATION OF THE EASTERN CHURCHES INTO FOUR COMMUNIONS OF CHURCHES

The split of the Eastern Churches into separate church communions that refused to recognize each other happened slowly over a period of centuries. In many cases, the break was not final at one definite point. Still, certain historical events were clearly turning points that solidified the distance between the Churches.

The Church of the East

The Council of Ephesus in 431 was one of the defining moments for the Christian Church in helping to clarify what was believed about Jesus. When Nestorius (d. after 451) was condemned at the council — which incidentally refused to allow him to speak in his own defense — he, and all “Nestorians” in sympathy with him, were exiled from the Greco-Roman Empire. Many of them went east to the Persian Empire.

The Assyro-Chaldean Church was predominantly in the Persian Empire, which was almost continuously at war with the Greco-Roman Empire. As Christians, the Assyro-Chaldeans were suspected of sympathies with the Greco-Romans who, by the 400s, were mainly Christians. The Assyro-Chaldeans generally accepted the exiled “Nestorians.” No leaders of the Assyro-Chaldeans had been present at the council. In time, the Assyro-Chaldeans also rejected the Council of Ephesus for a number of reasons. Partly, they sympathized with the exiled “Nestorians.” It also was safer politically to separate from the Greco-Roman Church. Other Churches came to call the Assyro-Chaldean Christians “the Nestorian Church,” but neither Nestorius nor the Nestorians had anything to do with foundation of this ancient Church, which had existed for centuries before Nestorius was born. After the Council of Ephesus, two Churches called themselves “**the Church of the East**”: the big, Orthodox-Catholic Church and the Assyro-Chaldeans.

The Oriental Orthodox Church

Another turning point was the famous Council of Chalcedon in 451. Chalcedon worked out theological explanations of Who Christ is using the Greek Platonic and Neo-Platonic philosophy. Their famous phrase is, of course, that Christ is one person in two natures. Unfortunately for the Coptic Egyptians, the Syriac Antiochenes, and the Armenians, this sort of philosophical distinction did not make much sense within their understanding of theology. They also saw no need to create new theological formulas. It seemed that the older, traditional theology they

had had up to that point was perfectly good. Despite the many accusations against them, it is clear that they have always believed and always held that Jesus was both fully human and fully God.

The reaction to the Council of Chalcedon, then, created yet another break in the Eastern Churches. The Armenian Church, the Antiochene Church, the Coptic Church in Egypt and the Ethiopic Church rejected Chalcedon and formed, instead, the communion of **Oriental Orthodox** or **Pre-Chalcedonian Churches**. Other Churches called them “Monophysites,” meaning “one nature.” This split left three Churches: 1) the Orthodox Catholic Church including Rome and Constantinople, 2) the Oriental Orthodox Churches, and 3) the Assyro-Chaldean Church of the East.

The Orthodox Church

The gap between Latin Rome in the west and Greek Constantinople in the East grew over centuries. Particularly after the fifth century, there were few Greeks who could read Latin and few Latins who knew Greek, so the theologies of the two Churches grew in isolation from each other. Political tensions between Rome and Constantinople also aggravated their disagreements. For brief periods, the two Churches broke off their communion, but soon restored it.

Then, in 1054, a dispute between papal envoy Cardinal Humbert of Candida Silva (d. 1061) and Patriarch Michael Cerularius of Constantinople (d. 1058) divided the Orthodox Church in the East from the Catholic Church in the West. Cardinal Humbert, impatient with his treatment by the patriarch, issued a bull excommunicating the patriarch and his Church, and the **Orthodox Church** responded in kind, which left the Catholic Church in the West, the Orthodox Church, the Oriental Orthodox Church, and the Church of the East.

In some ways, this was a break not all that different from some of the earlier ones. In some cases, the Churches continued to work together. Still, when Pope Paul VI and Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras of

Constantinople chose to make a dramatic step toward healing the break between their churches in 1965, it was those excommunications of 1054 that they chose to reject.

The Eastern Catholic Churches

One final step created the present situation in the Christian East. Beginning with the Second Council of Lyons in 1274, the Catholic Church invited groups of Eastern Christians to unite with the Catholic Church while retaining their own spirituality, Liturgy and distinctive Way of Life or Tradition. For a variety of theological, political, and educational reasons, many Eastern Christian groups joined the Catholic Church. These reunions created what is now called the **Eastern Catholic Churches**.

Two Eastern Catholic Churches, however, have always been at least in some sense, part of the Catholic Church. From ancient times there have been Greek-speaking areas of southern Italy and Sicily. At some point very early on (no one knows exactly when), they picked up the Byzantine Tradition and have lived by it since then. At present, there are two dioceses of Italo-Greek Catholics, one on the Italian mainland and the other in Sicily. The Abbey of San Nilo at Grottaferrata in the Alban Hills (outside of Rome), founded in the 11th century is their spiritual center. The monks maintain fraternal and friendly relationships with various Orthodox Churches and monasteries.

Likewise, the Maronite Church, first in Syria and later in Lebanon, never formally separated itself from the Catholic Church. There certainly were centuries when the Maronites and the Pope in Rome had no contact with each other, but from the time of the Crusades in the twelfth century, the Maronite Church has strongly and unambiguously affirmed its adherence to the Catholic Church.

The Christians who follow the Assyro-Chaldean Christians were, for centuries, called the Church of the East, but a majority joined the Catholic Church as part of the Chaldean Catholic Church in the

sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The minority are the Assyrians, who form the Church of the East. The great majority of the Christians in India who follow the Assyro-Chaldean Tradition are part of the Malabar Catholic Church, although there is also a small community of the Church of the East.

Smaller segments of the Armenian, the Antiochene, the Coptic, and the Ethiopic Churches all joined the Catholic Church. The several Byzantine Catholic Churches are larger than some other Eastern Catholic Churches, but they are smaller than their corresponding Orthodox Churches. Parallel Catholic and Orthodox Churches for these Traditions exist.

The Orthodox Churches are far and away the most numerous Eastern Christians. They have somewhere around 25 separate Church communities, each of which is independent, but which recognize each other. All of them follow the Byzantine Tradition. The largest Church by far is the Russian Orthodox Church, followed in size by the Romanian Orthodox and the Greek Orthodox Churches.

Likewise, the Catholics of the Byzantine Tradition, or Greek Catholics, are a very diverse group, having ten separate Church hierarchies within the Catholic Church. Without question, the largest group is the Ukrainian Catholic Church. The second largest Eastern Catholic Church is the Malabar Catholic Church in south India. At present, the Christian East is made up of the following Church groups.

- A. The Assyrian Church of the East
- B. The Oriental Orthodox (or Pre-Chalcedonian) Churches
- C. The Orthodox Churches
- D. The Eastern Catholic Churches

LIFE OF THE EASTERN CHRISTIAN CHURCHES

Obviously, there are many differences between the Ways of Life found among these many churches. The way Christians live in the

Oriental Orthodox Syrian Jacobite Church in southeastern Turkey would have to be different from life in the Orthodox Church of Finland. Still, there are many similarities.

Eastern Churches are generally smaller. Certainly in much of the world, both parishes and dioceses are considerably smaller than what one finds in the Roman Catholic or Protestant churches. One would find nothing like the mega-churches of hundreds of thousands of members in the Christian East. It is not at all unusual for an entire diocese to be made up of 50,000 or fewer people. In consequence, those who are most active in their parishes have generally met their bishop several times. In many cases, ordinary lay people are closer to their hierarchy and have a stronger sense of the church being truly theirs.

Eastern Church members are frequently closely connected to the identity of the ethnic group in which they grew up. For instance, the vast majority of Serbs are members of the Serbian Orthodox Church. It is certainly true that some Serbs are Roman Catholic, Protestant, and even members of non-Christian religions. Still, in the mind of most Serbs, to be fully and entirely Serbian, one must be Orthodox. Indeed, one can hardly understand Serbian history at all if one overlooks the centuries-long dedication of its people to the Serbian Orthodox Church. One would find similar reactions among the Armenians, the Ethiopians and within most other Eastern Churches as well.

Although mystery and the unexplainable are a part of all religion, the sense of mystery is much more at the heart of Eastern Christianity. Some Eastern Churches refer to the sacraments as “the mysteries.” The sense is that God and his life with His people is mainly beyond human understanding or explanation; all we can do is celebrate it.

As with Russian spirituality, beauty and the senses play a large role in Eastern Christian worship. The concept of beauty and its importance stands out in the story of Vladimir’s conversion. He was not moved by the truth of the Christian doctrines. The legend says nothing about doctrine. What moved the Russians was that the liturgical services were beautiful.

In much of Eastern spirituality, religion and religious usage should be beautiful. The hymns of the Liturgy are moving poetry, accompanied by stirring music. Eastern Christians do not generally share the Puritans' dislike or fear of what is beautiful. The stark plainness of early Puritan churches in New England, for instance, is far removed from the highly ornamented world of most Orthodox Churches.

Many Eastern Churches have used various icons in their services for many centuries. Most are painted on wood, but they are also painted as frescoes on plaster. The Romanian Church has distinctive icons painted on glass and even on the outside walls of Churches. For Eastern Christians, icons are treated like the pictures of loved ones: they are kept at hand and handled with loving gentleness. Certainly even the simplest peasant understands that the icons are not magic idols, but pictures of Christ and of beloved Christian heroes.

Eastern Theology and Spirituality

Many of the differences between East and West are questions of emphasis. Some issues are more important in the East than in the West, and vice versa. For instance, systematic theology, which makes a harmonious system of the whole of theology, has not been especially prominent in the East. To some extent, the great Greek theologian, Saint Maximus the Confessor (c. 580-662), could be considered a systematic theologian, as could Saint John of Damascus (c. 655-c. 750). But, following them, one would find few systematic theologians in the East until Father Dumitru Staniloae (1903-1993) of Romania.

On the other hand, Eastern Christianity has had a rich tradition of teachers of prayer and spirituality. After the great Fathers of the Church, such as Saint Athanasius of Alexandria (c. 296-373), Saint Ephraem the Syrian (c. 309-373), Saint Basil the Great (c. 330-370), Saint John Chrysostom (c. 347-407), and Saint Gregory of Nazianzen ("the Theologian," 329-389) among many others, there is a rich history of

writers on prayer, such as Saint John Climacus (c. 570-c. 649) and Saint Symeon the New Theologian (949-1022).

A particularly influential current of theology and spirituality in Eastern Christianity is known as *hesychasm*, which focuses particularly on the Jesus Prayer (“Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner”). It drew on the work of many Eastern theologians, but Saint Gregory of Palamas (c. 1296-1359) is remembered as its great defender. Hesychasm elaborated a very audacious theology of *theosis*, or *deification*, which teaches that humans can become God by participation. Only the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are God by *nature*, but by living with and in God, humans can become God *by participation*.

It is difficult to characterize all of Eastern Christian theology in a few words. A simplistic approach could say that Eastern theology tends to accent similarities and connections, while Western theology works frequently with distinctions and divisions. In other words, Eastern theology tends to see God’s whole message to humanity as a single unified tradition of revelation or *parádoxis*, which includes scripture and other components. The prayers and actions of the Liturgy are also seen as a source for theology because the Holy Spirit has inspired the manner in which Christians pray in Church. Theology in the East tends to focus on relationships –God and the believer, the individual believer and the Church community, and so on.

Among English-speaking writers and theologians of Eastern Christianity, some of the most notable recent ones are Father Alexander Schmemmann (1921-1983), Father John Meyendorff (1926-1992) and Bishop Kallistos (Ware) of Diokleia (1934-). Father Robert Taft (1932-) and other scholars at the Pontifical Oriental Institute in Rome have contributed to the scholarship on the liturgies and to other studies on the Eastern Churches.

Church Buildings, Incense, and the Liturgical Services

In the early centuries, most Christian Churches, whether Eastern or Western, were laid out on an east-west plan (for instance, Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome). Many Eastern Churches continue to use this basic plan. The sanctuary and the altar are to the east and the main door is to the west. The east has, for centuries, represented God and holiness. For Christians the sun rising in the east has often been a symbol of Christ rising from the dead on Easter Sunday. In the Byzantine baptismal ritual, one renounces Satan facing west and then turns to the east to profess faith in Christ and the Holy Trinity. One enters the Church, symbolically, in the west—from what is less perfect and less holy—and moves east, toward God and what is good and more holy. Consequently, many Eastern churches continue to have the priest on the west side of the altar facing east, as the congregation does.

Most Eastern religious services make great use of incense. A typical Sunday service will use incense at least four or five times. Sometimes incense is also used for minor blessings. The burning of incense has several meanings. First, burning spices and ointments is an offering to God of things that could be used otherwise for personal pleasure or profit. So, it is a form of sacrifice. Then the incense smells pleasant and sweet, reminding us that service to God gives one's life a wholesome and attractive character – what is lost in sin. Finally, as Psalm 140 says, our prayers go to God like the smoke of the incense rising up to heaven.

Most Eastern Christian liturgical services have a much stronger emphasis on the Holy Spirit than either Roman Catholic or Protestant services. For instance, every Byzantine office (except from Easter to Pentecost) includes the following prayer:

Heavenly King, Comforter, Spirit of Truth, everywhere present and filling all things, Treasury of Blessings, and Giver of Life, come and dwell within us, cleanse of all stain, and save our souls, O gracious One.

A key theme in the services of most Eastern Churches is also the connection between the celestial Liturgy in heaven and our Liturgy on earth. Like some of the Fathers of the Church in the first centuries, Easterners tend to think of their Liturgy as a reflection of the Liturgy of the Holy Trinity with the Saints and Angels. Consequently, the Saints and the Angels appear more frequently in iconography and in the Divine Liturgy. One of the more striking examples of this is the Byzantine Prayer of Entrance early in the Divine Liturgy, as the ministers enter the sanctuary at the Little Entrance:

O Lord and Master, our God, who in heaven have established orders and armies of Angels and Archangels to minister to your majesty, grant that the holy Angels may make the entrance with us and concelebrate with us and co-glorify your goodness. For to you belongs all glory, honor, and worship, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now and always and forever and ever. Amen.

The prayer asks that the Angels in the heavenly Liturgy also be present in our Liturgy, and then goes a step further, asking that they concelebrate our Liturgy.

While it would be unfair to say that any Western Church neglects either the Resurrection of Christ or Easter, one can say that the Eastern Churches place a much stronger emphasis on Christ's Resurrection than the Western Church. Easter is not simply one of the most important feasts for Eastern Christians, it is *the* Feast of feasts—in a class all by itself. The eight-week cycle of hymns and refrains used on Sundays throughout the year by Byzantine Christians are called “the Resurrection tones.” One of the resurrection Gospels is read in the Sunday matins service each week.

In all Eastern Churches, the Easter vigil and Divine Liturgy are, without question, the crown and center of the liturgical year, despite their length. Even today, the diet of ordinary Christians is frequently dramatically restricted during the Great Fast (Lent), leading up to Holy Week and Easter. Consequently, the liturgical blessing of all these foods

and their reintroduction into the diet makes Easter also a culinary delight. The dietary changes and the Lenten church services mean that the whole lifestyle changes radically at Easter, making it not only a religious occasion, but also a major turning point in the life of the Church.

Because of the great richness of liturgical prayers, and their abundance, most personal prayers used by Eastern Christian believers come from hymns and prayers in the Liturgy. In the Western Church, a great number of the prayers used for personal devotion are not from the Liturgy. They are, rather, prayers that grew out of personal devotion. In the Eastern Churches, the link between the Liturgy of the Church and personal devotion is very close. Most prayers for personal use come from the Liturgy and change with the liturgical season. Liturgical greetings (for instance at Easter, “Christ is risen,” response: “Indeed He is risen”) are used in everyday life.

Each Tradition has its own distinctive liturgical services. Eastern Churches also have rites (“mysteries”) corresponding to the seven sacraments of the Roman Catholic Church. In many Churches baptism, chrismation (confirmation), and first communion are given together in receiving infants into the Church community. In such cases, babies and children continue to regularly receive Holy Communion. Although the number of seven major “mysteries” (sacraments) has become rooted in many Eastern churches, other ceremonies with similar structures are considered to have similar value, such as monastic profession.

The Divine Liturgy

All the Eastern Churches celebrate on Sundays their own form of the Eucharist, like the Roman Mass. It is called “the Divine Liturgy” in many traditions. It always has a Liturgy of the Word, in which scripture passages are read. This is followed by the Liturgy of the Eucharist, which leads up to communion. Each Liturgy has an anáphora, like the eucharistic prayers found in the Roman Mass in which the saving acts of the Lord are recalled and the bread and wine are transformed into the Body and Blood

of Christ. The service is overwhelmingly sung, both by the clergy and by the laity. Although the Ethiopic, Maronite and Malabar Liturgies sometimes use musical instruments, mainly percussion, most other Eastern liturgies are sung without instrumental accompaniment.

In the Assyro-Chaldean Liturgy, this prayer before the epistle expresses the sense of the Christian people listening to God's word in the scriptures.

Illuminate, O our Lord and our God, the thoughts of our heart, so that we understand the kindly words of your life-giving and divine commandments. In your goodness and your mercy, grant us to reap their fruits: love, hope and the salvation, which both body and soul need. Without end we will sing your praise, O Lord of the universe, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit forever.

After the readings, there is, in some churches, a homily. In other cases, it comes at the end of the Liturgy. Following either the readings or the homily there are prayers for the Church, its needs, all the faithful, the deceased, the government, the poor and those in great need. Roman Catholics would call these prayers the General Intercessions.

In preparation for the anáphora, the eucharistic gifts of bread and wine are brought to the altar. The ancient of the kiss of peace takes place at this point in Eastern liturgies.

In Eastern Christianity the anáphoras have a stronger emphasis on the action of the Holy Spirit in the Liturgy which is called an epíclesis. The epíclesis calls on the Spirit to consecrate the eucharistic gifts and transform them into the Body and Blood of the Lord. For example, in the Coptic Liturgy of Saint Cyril, we find:

And send down from your holy heights, and from your prepared mansion, and from your boundless bosom, and from the throne of the kingdom of your glory, the Paraclete...

... upon us your servants, and upon these precious gifts which have been set before you, upon this bread and this cup, that they may be sanctified and changed (R. Amen). And this bread He makes into the holy Body of Christ (R. Amen). And this chalice also, the precious Blood of His New Covenant (R. Amen). Our Lord, God, Savior, and King of us all, Jesus Christ (R. Amen).

As in the Roman Mass, the Lord's Prayer is part of the precommunion rites in the Eastern liturgies. Then communion is given from both the Holy Bread and the Holy Wine. After Holy Communion, there is a thanksgiving for God's gift of himself to His people. In the Armenian Tradition, the hymn sung by the choir is the following:

We have been filled with your good things, O Lord, by tasting of your Body and Blood. Glory in the highest to you who have fed us. You who continually feed us, send down upon us your spiritually blessing. Glory in the highest to you who feed us.

After the conclusion of the Maronite Divine Liturgy, there is a unique "Farewell to the Altar" for the priest. The priest prays:

Remain in peace, O altar of God, and I hope to return to you in peace. May the sacrifice which I have offered on you forgive my sins, help me to avoid faults and prepare me to stand blameless before the throne of Christ. I know not whether I will be able to return to you again to offer sacrifice.

Guard me, O Lord, and protect your holy Church, that she may remain the way of salvation and the life of the world. Amen.

Married Clergy

Just as most of the apostles were married, so in the ancient Church most priests were married. The policy of the Christian Church was that

candidates for ordained life must be married before ordination to the diaconate. In the ancient discipline of the Church, a priest was not allowed to re-marry even if widowed. Although bishops were also sometimes married in the earliest centuries, from a relatively early period they were required to be celibate.

Especially with rise of celibate monastic life in the fourth and fifth centuries, there was a dramatic growth in the celibate priests, many of whom were monks. In the Western Roman Catholic Church, eventually celibacy became the normal way of life for all priests, just as Roman Catholic priests took on other aspects of monastic life, like distinctive dark (or black) clothes and the obligation to pray the Divine Office.

In the Eastern Churches, the clergy developed two branches: the married clergy and the monastic clergy, a pattern which continues in many Eastern Churches. In many cases, the clergy serving in parishes are married. The married priests are sometimes called “white clergy” because in some cases they wear cassocks made of white or colored cloth. The monastic priests are often been called “black priests” because of their black cassocks.

Some of the Eastern Churches that joined the Catholic Church and became Eastern Catholic Churches were constrained to give up ordaining married men. Other Eastern Catholic Churches, however, retain their married clergy and in many of those Churches, married priests are the vast majority, as with the Ukrainian Catholic Church and the Hungarian Catholic Church.

In the closing years of the twentieth century and the opening years of the twenty-first, the question of married and celibate clergy has been in flux among Eastern Catholic Churches. Some Churches, such as the Ruthenian Catholic Church in the United States, have begun to ordain married priests.

Canon Law

From the earliest centuries, the Christian Church has had *canons*, norms which establish how the Church is to function. Most of the canons were written or approved by Church councils and synods. Sometimes the canons contradict one another. There have been various collections of the canons, such *The Rudder* (original Greek, *To Pedalion*).

One of the notable accomplishments of the Eastern Catholic Churches in the field of canon law was the production of a consistent and unified code of Eastern Catholic canon law. Work on it began in earnest under Pope Pius XI in 1927. The *Codex Canonum Ecclesiarum Orientalium* (“Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches”) was finally completed and promulgated by Pope John Paul II in 1990. Among other things, it specifies the types of Eastern Catholic Churches: 1) patriarchal, 2) major archiepiscopal, 3) metropolitan, and 4) eparchial (*ceterae ecclesiae*). Patriarchal Churches enjoy a great deal of autonomy and are predominantly directed by the patriarch and his synod. The major archiepiscopal Churches have slightly less autonomy. Eparchial Churches have the least independence.

The Eastern Catholic Churches are part of the Catholic Church. They fall under the direction of the Vatican dicastery, known as the *Congregation for the Eastern Churches*, whose head is chosen by the pope. This Congregation collaborates and coordinates a variety of efforts with experts on Liturgy, Canon Law, faith and ministerial formation and studies on various aspects of the patrimony of Eastern Churches, in order to deepen knowledge of Catholicism.

Latinizations

Almost all Eastern Churches have, at one time or another, undergone some *latinizations*, meaning that parts of their own distinctive liturgical and theological usages were abandoned for Roman Catholic customs. At times, even some Orthodox Churches used Western Latin Roman Catholic theology books because they were the only ones available.

Obviously, if priests were trained using Roman Catholic manuals, their theology would reflect more Roman Catholic than Eastern Christian theology. Certainly, the impact of latinizations has been much more dramatic on the Eastern Catholic Churches.

To take one clear example, the Eastern Churches continued the practice of the ancient Church for baptism and Eucharist. The practice in both the Orthodox East and the Catholic West was that at baptism, everyone, including infants, also received chrismation (confirmation), and Eucharist. Toward the end of the first millennium, the Roman Catholics changed this practice and instituted first communion ceremonies for young children. After joining the Catholic Church, Byzantine Catholics (also called “Greek Catholics”) in many areas adopted the Roman Catholic practice, even though their original commitment in joining the Catholic Church was to retain their original usage, and the Catholic Church had guaranteed their right to do so. But over the centuries things slipped, particularly when Eastern Catholic seminarians studied in Roman Catholic seminaries and universities, but learned very little about the history, theology, and Liturgy of their own Tradition. Finally, the Second Vatican Council in 1964 published *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*, a brief, but radical, document which urged Eastern Catholics to purge the latinizations in their Church and return to their original practice. Since then, the Church has specified how to make these reforms. Some Churches have made considerable changes; others have barely started.

CONCLUSION

These, then, are the Churches of the Christian East. Many of these Christian Ways of Life are very ancient indeed. Pope John Paul wrote in *Ut Unum Sint* that “Speaking of the Churches of the East, the [Second Vatican] Council acknowledged their great liturgical and spiritual tradition, the specific nature of their historical development, the disciplines coming from the earliest times and approved by the Holy Fathers and Ecumenical Councils, and their own particular way of expressing their teaching” (50).

The origins of the Antiochene Tradition are to be found in the New Testament (Acts 11: 19-26). Other Churches began more recently, such as the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church in 1665 or the sister Church, the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church, in 1930. Nonetheless, even the more recent Eastern Churches live by a particular Christian way of life which began in the apostolic period. Today there are communities of Eastern Churches on every continent. Some continue to serve God in the languages of their ancient homelands, while others have translated their liturgies into modern languages. Many of the larger Eastern Churches clearly engage modern culture by “giving a vivid expression to the Church’s catholicity and the variety of her liturgical and spiritual traditions,” as Pope Benedict XVI reminded the U.S. bishops on his pastoral visit on April 16, 2008. These churches are both rooted in the distant past but also they are very much part of the modern world. Pope John Paul II reminded us of the importance of knowing something about Eastern Christianity when he said, in *Oriente Lumen*, “The East helps us to express the Christian meaning of the human person with a wealth of elements. It is centered on the Incarnation, from which creation itself draws light. In Christ, true God and true man, the fullness of the human vocation is revealed” (15). So, like those of all Traditions, Eastern Christians seek to be “like a householder who brings out from his storeroom new things as well as old” (Matthew 13:52).

GLOSSARY

Abbey of San Nilo: (Italian, *Monastero esarchico di Santa Maria di Grottaferrata*): Ancient Byzantine monastery of the Italo-Greek Catholic Church. It was founded in 1004 by a group of monks from Calabria under the leadership of Saint Nilo of Rossano (910-1004). It is located in the Alban Hills (Italian, *Castelli romani*) in the town of Grottaferrata a short distance southeast of Rome.

Anáphora: A Greek word meaning “carrying back,” “reference,” “recourse.” Applied to the Divine Liturgy (the Eucharist), it is “carrying back,” the “reference” back to the saving works of God in salvation history at the same time asking the Holy Spirit to hallow the gifts of bread and wine and the Church; in current Roman Catholic practice called “the eucharistic prayer.”

Antiochene Tradition: The Christian way of life that developed in Antioch and the surrounding area of what is today southeastern Turkey, Israel/Palestine, and Syria. It is one of three ancient traditions expressed in the Syriac language. It is the tradition followed by the Syrian Orthodox Church, the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church, the Syrian Catholic Church and the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church.

Assyro-Chaldean Tradition: The Christian way of life that developed in Mesopotamia and the surrounding areas, what are today eastern Syria, Iraq, and northwestern Iran. The Assyro-Chaldean Church traces its origins to Saint Thomas the Apostle. It is one of three ancient traditions expressed in the Syriac language. This Church also developed almost all of its theology and liturgy without reference to Greek philosophy and terms. It is the tradition followed by the (Assyrian) Church of the East, the Chaldean Catholic Church, and by the Syro-Malabar Catholic Church in India.

Armenian Tradition: The Christian way of life that developed in Armenia and among the Armenian people in other areas. Saint Gregory the Illuminator is recognized as the founder of the Armenian Church. The Armenian Church's development is the result of the many influences of culture and theology from outside its geo-location. It is the tradition followed by the Armenian Apostolic Church, and by the Armenian Catholic Church.

Byzantine Tradition: The Christian way of life that developed originally in Constantinople (present-day Istanbul, Turkey), from 330 to 1453 capital of the Roman Empire (often called the Byzantine Empire although the empire always considered itself the authentic Roman Empire). This Tradition spread throughout the eastern Mediterranean and to Russia and Eastern Europe. It is the Tradition followed by the Orthodox Church, and by many Byzantine Catholic, or Greek Catholic, Churches.

Canon: This is a Greek term (*kanôn*) meaning "rule" or "measure." In Eastern Christianity, ecclesiastical policies or rules, many of them established by councils and synods.

Canon Law: The body of canons, guiding the life and discipline of the Christian Church. The Eastern Catholic Churches have a unified and integrated code of Eastern canon law, the *Codex Canonum Ecclesiarum Orientalium* ("Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches") which was promulgated in 1990 by Pope John Paul II.

Catholic: The Greek term *katholikos*, meaning "universal" or "general." It was first applied to the Christians in Smyrna c. 107 by Saint Ignatius of Antioch. As a title for Christianity it denotes a characteristic communion and unity of dogma/doctrine held by the entire Christian Church in all places and times, as opposed to local usage. Therefore, it shows that there is an unity of belief versus holding beliefs that are heretical or schismatic and it describes the Churches who are in communion with the See of Rome. Applied to the Eastern Churches, *Catholic* almost always means the Churches

in communion with the See of Rome, as opposed to *Orthodox* or *Apostolic* Churches not in communion with Rome.

Catholicos: The supreme head of the Armenian Apostolic Church. The Catholicos is elected by a group of delegates consisting of clergy and laity. Since the Church is at present (spring 2008) divided, there are two Armenian Apostolic Catholicos: one at Etchmiadzin, Armenia and the other at Antelias, Lebanon. The head of the Malankara Orthodox Church based in Kottayam, Kerala, India is also called “Catholicos.”

Coptic Tradition: This Christian way of life developed in Egypt and was founded by Saint Mark in Alexandria c. A.D. 42. From Saint Jerome we know that there was an important school of theology (some boast that it is the oldest catechetical school in the world) which widely influenced spread of Christianity throughout the world. The Coptic Church is also credited with being the cradle of monasticism. Both Catholics and Orthodox Churches use similar liturgies and rituals.

Council of Chalcedon: A Church council, which met at Chalcedon (present-day Kadiköy, Turkey) in 451. It is recognized as the fourth Ecumenical Council by the Catholic and Orthodox Churches. This Council defined Christ being of full humanity and full divinity, and was the second person of the Trinity. Therefore, the Council rejected Eutyches’ teaching that Christ had one nature, divine and was not human. Those Churches which refused to accept the council are the Oriental Orthodox Church.

Council of Ephesus: A Church council, which met at Ephesus (no longer inhabited, near Selçuk, Turkey) in 431. It is recognized as the third Ecumenical Council by the Catholic and Orthodox Churches. The Council was called to deal with the heterodox teachings of Nestorius regarding Christ and His mother, Mary. Saint Cyril of Alexandria was a key bishop at this council and was instrumental in teaching that Christ was one person with two natures (divine and

human) and that Mary is to be called *Theotokos*, The Bearer of God. The Church of the East refused to accept the council.

Council of Lyons II: A Church council, which met at Lyons, France in 1274. It is recognized as the fourteenth Ecumenical Council in Roman Catholic numbering. It proclaimed a short-lived reunion between the Orthodox and Catholic Churches.

Divine Liturgy: The normal Eastern term for the liturgical service of the Eucharist, like the Mass in the Roman Catholic Church.

Eparch: A Greek term meaning to “rule over something.” In English it means a “bishop.” The eparch has ordinary pastoral responsibilities for an established eparchy (diocese).

Epiclesis: A Greek term meaning “calling upon,” “invocation,” or “appeal.” The epiclesis is that part of the anáphora said by the priest asking God carry out a change or transformation in something, especially the change of bread and wine into the body and blood of the Lord.

Ethiopic Tradition: Tradition holds that Philip the Apostle founded this Church (see Acts of the Apostles 8) but the Church solidified in the 4th century. This tradition makes the claim to originally hosting the Ark of the Covenant. It is the tradition followed by the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, the Eritrean Orthodox Church and by the Ethiopian Catholic Church.

Greek Catholic: An alternate term for Byzantine Catholic (see “Byzantine Tradition”).

Haghia Sophia: Translated from the Greek meaning “Holy Wisdom.” The Haghia Sophia is known as the “Great Church” of Constantinople built under Emperor Justinian in the 530s. Its chief feature is the enormous dome. Its structural layout played a decisive role in the shaping of Byzantine liturgy. In 1453 the church was converted into a mosque and since 1935 it has been a museum.

Hesychasm: A Greek term (*hesychia*) meaning “quietness.” A current of Eastern mysticism focused on inner, mystical prayer, particularly associated with the monasteries on Mount Athos. The continuous repetition of the Jesus Prayer is a central element of Hesychasm. Major proponents of Hesychasm are Saints Gregory Palamas and Symeon the New Theologian. Spiritual works like the *Philokalia* and the *Ladder of Divine Ascent* guide the reader through this type of prayer.

Holy Trinity: God as three persons (Greek *hypostaseis*): the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Iconostasis: Partition or wall covered with icons (religious images), separating the sanctuary from the nave in Byzantine Churches.

Incense: Spices and perfumed substances burned to give a sweet odor and smoke. The symbolic of smoke reminds us of the words of Psalm 141 where it speaks of our prayers ascending to God. In Eastern Churches, as in the Western Church, incense is used in all liturgical services to honor the altar, people and other material elements like the bread and wine to be transformed into the Body and Blood of Christ.

Jesus Prayer: The prayer “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of (the living) God, have mercy on me (a sinner).” Hesychasm recommended unceasing repetition of this prayer connected to the breath and heart beat. The nineteenth-century Russian classic, *The Way of the Pilgrim*, centers on the spiritual path of man whose prayer life centers on the Jesus Prayer.

Latinization: The adoption of Roman Catholic (Western) thinking and practices by Eastern Christians to replace existing indigenous Eastern ones. Often these new ways of thinking and practices were imposed on Eastern Christians by missionaries and framed in such a way that anything different from the Western Church was seen as heretical and schismatic. In time the Church has viewed the problem of adopting Western thinking and practices as a lack of

consideration of the authentic meaning and place of Eastern thinking and practices in theology and liturgy of a particular church. Ultimately, this process called “latinization” uncritically accepted outside influences without fully knowing one’s own tradition first. Examples of Latinizing the Eastern liturgical tradition are the substitution of the Way of the Cross for the traditional Lenten Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts among Byzantine Catholics, kneeling at the anaphora and shortening the liturgical services, the introduction of Western music and the removal of the icon screen. The adoption of the Roman calendar in the Syro-Malabar Church is a good of example of the Western sensibility on the Christian East.

Liturgy of the Hours: The system of daily liturgical services of praise, of which the principal offices are often matins and vespers. The psalms usually constitute a notable portion of these services. Although confession and communion are sometimes administered during the liturgy of the hours, in their simplest basic form no other mystery or sacrament is given in the liturgy of the hours.

Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts: A Byzantine Lenten evening service comprising most of vespers, followed by communion with consecrated bread from previous celebrations of the Divine Liturgy.

Major Archbishop: The head of certain Eastern Catholic Churches. Churches headed by a Major Archbishop have more autonomy than Metropolitan Churches in deciding ecclesiastical discipline but they have slightly less autonomy than Patriarchal Churches. At the time of this writing (spring 2008), the Romanian Catholic Church, the Syro-Malabar Catholic Church, and the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church are Major Archepiscopal Churches. Many in the Ukrainian Catholic claim patriarchal dignity for their Church, but the See of Rome recognizes the Church as being a Major Archepiscopal Church.

Malabar Church: The south Indian Church that follows the Assyro-Chaldean Tradition. The tradition holds that Saint Thomas the Apostle brought Christianity to India in A.D. 52. Hence these Christians are often called “Saint Thomas Christians.” It is made up of the Syro-Malabar Catholic Church and a small community of the Church of the East.

Malankara Church: Also from south India, this Church follows the Antiochene Tradition and it also makes the claim of being founded by Saint Thomas the Apostle in A.D. 52. There are Syro-Malankara Catholics and the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church.

Maronite Tradition: The Christian way of life that first developed in the valley of the Orontes River in present-day southeastern Turkey around the monastery founded by Saint Maron. The community later settled in Lebanon. It is one of three ancient traditions expressed in the Syriac language. It is the tradition followed by the Maronite Catholic Church.

Metropolitan: A Greek term (*metropolis*) meaning “mother-city,” “capital city,” or “metropolis.” As an ecclesiastical term it is applied to both the major (eparchy) diocese among a group of eparchies and also to the bishop of such an eparchy.

Monastic Profession: The rituals by which one becomes a monk or a nun. In the Christian East monastic profession has a similar sensibility as marriage. That is, it is a life-changing mystery. Saint Symeon of Thessalonika (+1429) includes the monastic life in his list of sacraments but connects it with the sacrament of Penance in order to keep the number of sacraments at seven (categories of sacraments and sacramentals are often seen as Western concepts and their application to Eastern theology are imperfect).

Monophysite: An outdated term referring to the Oriental Orthodox Churches, due to their rejection of the Chalcedonian definition of the two natures of Christ (Greek *physeis*).

Nestorians: An erroneous term referring to the (Assyrian) Church of the East, which received some followers of Nestorius after their condemnation at the Council of Ephesus in 431. The term is no longer used by contemporary scholars.

Oriental Orthodox Churches: The communion of independent Churches that rejected the Council of Chalcedon in 451.

Orthodox Church: The communion of Churches, all following the Byzantine Tradition, which accepts the (first) seven Ecumenical Councils also recognized by Catholic Churches. Conventionally, the separation is said to date from the excommunications of 1054, but the reality is more complex. The Orthodox Church recognizes the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople as the “first among equals,” but has no direct authority on other bishops or eparchies (dioceses).

Parádoxis: The term comes from the Greek, meaning “handing down,” “transmission,” “tradition,” and “betrayal.” Tradition, meaning a whole Christian way of life, handed on from one generation to the next. In Eastern theology, Scripture, Liturgy, and magisterial teaching are constitute parts of the Tradition, instead of being separate components.

Patriarch: A senior bishop elected from among the synod of bishops of that particular church. In most Eastern Churches, the patriarch is the father and head of the Church. However in the Armenian Apostolic Church the supreme head of the Church is the *catholicos* and the bishops of Jerusalem and Constantinople are *patriarchs* (see “Catholicos”). A newly elected Catholic patriarch asks for the Bishop of Rome to recognize the bond of communion between them.

Mysteries: Christian rites to build up the faith of believers, giving grace, celebrated in the liturgical services of the Church. They are physical expressions of the beliefs, or mysteries, of the Christian Church. Most commonly numbered seven, in Eastern theology there has been disagreement about which seven rites are included. Roman Catholics use the term *sacraments*.

Second Vatican Council (Vatican II): Church council held at the Vatican from 1962 to 1965. It was called by Pope John XXIII and finished by Pope Paul VI. The Council produced the decree *Orientalium ecclesiarum* (“On the Eastern Catholic Churches”), a key milestone in the renaissance of Eastern Catholic identity. Orthodox observers were present and contributed behind the scenes.

Syriac: A Semitic language relate to Hebrew and Arabic. It is a dialect of Aramaic, the dominant spoken language in Syro-Palestine and Mosepotamia at the time of Jesus. Syriac was for centuries the dominant vehicle of theology and worship in the Antiochene Tradition, the Assyro-Chaldean Tradition, and the Maronite Tradition. Isolated communities in Turkey, Syria, Iraq, and Iran speak modern variants of Syriac, often called “Sureth.”

Systematic Theology: The organized theological reflection producing a philosophically integrated and consistent system of all theology. Eastern Christian systematic theologians have been relatively few. Among the Eastern Fathers of the Church, one could count Saint Maximus the Confessor (c. 580-662). The most notable modern Eastern systematician is Father Dumitru Staniloae (1903-93). The concept of theologian in the Eastern Church is modern. The work of a theologian involves the reflection and writing about Christian revelation and Christian life. In older usage, it reserved for exceptional and holy authorities on the Holy Trinity. In this sense, it is used principally for Saint John the Evangelist, Saint Gregory of Nazianzen (329-389) and Saint Symeon the New Theologian (949-1022).

Theosis: The concept of Christians being transformed into a participation in God. It played an important role in Hesychastic thought (see “Hesychasm” above). In the theology of Saint Gregory Palamas (1296-1359) humans participate in the energies of God, but not the essence of God.

Tradition: (see “Parádosis” above).

THE LIST OF EASTERN CHRISTIAN CHURCHES

- I. THE CHURCH OF THE EAST (Assyro-Chaldean Tradition)
- II. THE ORIENTAL ORTHODOX CHURCH
 - A. The Armenian Apostolic Church (Armenian Tradition)
 - B. The Coptic Orthodox Church (Coptic Tradition)
 - C. The Ethiopic Orthodox Church (Ethiopic Tradition)
 - D. The Syrian Orthodox Church (Antiochene Tradition)
 - E. The Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church (Antiochene Tradition)
 - F. The Eritrean Orthodox Church (Ethiopic Tradition)
- III. THE ORTHODOX CHURCH (all of the Byzantine Tradition)
 - A. The Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople (including the Greek Orthodox of North and South America)
 - B. The Patriarchate of Alexandria
 - C. The Patriarchate of Antioch
 - D. The Patriarchate of Jerusalem
 - E. The Orthodox Church of Russia
 - F. The Orthodox Church of Serbia
 - G. The Orthodox Church of Romania
 - H. The Orthodox Church of Bulgaria
 - I. The Orthodox Church of Georgia
 - J. The Orthodox Church of Cyprus
 - K. The Orthodox Church of Greece
 - L. The Orthodox Church of Poland
 - M. The Orthodox Church of Albania
 - N. The Orthodox Church in the Czech and Slovak Republics
 - O. The Orthodox Church in America
 - P. The Orthodox Church of Mt. Sinai
 - Q. The Orthodox Church of Finland
 - R. The Orthodox Church of Japan
 - S. The Orthodox Church of China

- T. The Estonian Apostolic Orthodox Church
- U. The American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese
- V. The Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA and the Diaspora
- W. The Russian Orthodox Exarchate in Western Europe
- Y. The Albanian Orthodox Diocese of America
- Z. The Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada
- AA. The Ukrainian Orthodox Church-Kiev Patriarchate
- BB. The Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church
- CC. The Belarusian Autocephalous Orthodox Church
- DD. The Macedonian Orthodox Church
- EE. The Old Calendar Orthodox Churches
- FF. The Old Believers

IV. THE EASTERN CATHOLIC CHURCHES

- A. The Maronite Catholic Church
- B. The Italo-Greek Catholic Church
- C. The Chaldean Catholic Church
- D. The Syro-Malabar Catholic Church
- E. The Armenian Catholic Church
- F. The Coptic Catholic Church
- G. The Ethiopian Catholic Church
- H. The Syrian Catholic Church
- I. The Syro-Malankara Catholic Church
- J. The Melkite Catholic Church
- K. The Ukrainian Catholic Church
- L. The Ruthenian Catholic Church
- M. The Romanian Catholic Church
- N. The Greek Catholic Church
- O. Greek Catholic Churches in former Yugoslavia
- P. The Bulgarian Catholic Church
- Q. The Slovak Catholic Church
- R. The Hungarian Catholic Church

(from *The Eastern Christian Churches: A Brief Survey*, on-line)

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