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978-0-521-81113-2 - The Cambridge History of Christianity, Volume 5: Eastern Christianity

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THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF
EASTERN CHRISTIANITY

This volume brings together in one compass the Orthodox churches of the ecumenical patriarchate – the Russian, Armenian, Ethiopian, Egyptian and Syrian churches. It follows their fortunes from the late Middle Ages until modern times – exactly the period when their history has been most neglected. Inevitably, this emphasises differences in teachings and experience, but it also brings out common threads, most notably the resilience displayed in the face of alien and often hostile political regimes. The central theme of this volume is the survival against the odds of Orthodoxy in its many forms into the modern era. The last phase of Byzantium proves to have been surprisingly important in this survival. It provided Orthodoxy with the intellectual, artistic and spiritual reserves to meet later challenges. The continuing vitality of the Orthodox churches is evident for example in the Sunday School Movement in Egypt and the Zoë brotherhood in Greece.

MICHAEL ANGOLD is a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society and is Professor Emeritus of Byzantine History at the University of Edinburgh. His most recent publications include *The Fourth Crusade: Event and Context* (2003), *Byzantium: The Bridge from Antiquity to the Middle Ages* (2001) and *Church and Society in Byzantium under the Comneni, 1081–1261* (1995).

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CHRISTIANITY

The *Cambridge History of Christianity* offers a comprehensive chronological account of the development of Christianity in all its aspects – theological, intellectual, social, political, regional, global – from its beginnings to the present day. Each volume makes a substantial contribution in its own right to the scholarship of its period and the complete *History* constitutes a major work of academic reference. Far from being merely a history of Western European Christianity and its offshoots, the *History* aims to provide a global perspective. Eastern and Coptic Christianity are given full consideration from the early period onwards, and later, African, Far Eastern, New World, South Asian and other non-European developments in Christianity receive proper coverage. The volumes cover popular piety and non-formal expressions of Christian faith and treat the sociology of Christian formation, worship and devotion in a broad cultural context. The question of relations between Christianity and other major faiths is also kept in sight throughout. The *History* will provide an invaluable resource for scholars and students alike.

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VOLUME 5
Eastern Christianity

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In Memory of Steven Runciman,
Dimitri Obolensky and Sergei Hackel

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by The Archbishop of Canterbury

The average educated westerner is still quite likely to think of Christianity in terms of a basically western Europe-dominated history: the church gradually builds up a centralised system of authority, filling the vacuum left by the fall of the Roman Empire; its ideological monopoly is challenged at the Reformation, and the map of the Christian world is reconfigured; and all the various territories on that map are now engaged in a doubtfully successful struggle with global modernity, except where the newer churches of Africa are mounting a vigorous counter-offensive. Even in some good and sophisticated surveys of world Christianity published in recent years, this remains the dominant picture.

But Christianity is more various than this begins to suggest. The essays in this volume introduce us to a variety of contexts substantially different from what has just been described. The faith of the Byzantine world had nothing to do with the filling of a political gap; the Roman Empire continued, with an educational system and a lay civil service which did not yield to the clergy the kind of cultural closed shop familiar in the mediaeval west. What is intriguing in this particular story is the spread of Byzantine Christianity not as a tool of 'empire' in the crude sense but as the carrier and the ally of a much more subtle process of cultural convergence – the 'Byzantine Commonwealth' over whose character a good deal of controversy continues. The Byzantine Christian heartland continued, even when Byzantium was in steep political decline, to nourish kindred but diverse cultural and intellectual projects, of which Muscovite Russia is probably the most influential (and in many ways the most eccentric). It is a record which does not easily fit into most of the 'faith and culture' typologies familiar in western theological and historical writing.

The 'commonwealth' of Byzantine Christianity was not only about material culture, political rhetoric and artistic style. It was also a commonwealth of

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spiritual practice – the liturgy, but also, no less importantly, the monastic life. ‘Hesychasm’, the practice of silent prayer free of ideas and images and grounded in a set of physical disciplines, became, from the fourteenth century to the present day, as clear a sign of the convergent Christian culture of eastern Europe as anything. How far it represented the resurgence and refocusing of a classical spiritual practice and how far it was innovatory and indeed in some ways subversive of such a tradition is a matter of keen debate, and the evidence of this debate can be traced in the pages that follow. In the twentieth century, the hesychast tradition, in ways that might surprise those who know it only through versions of the medieval disputes, has been one of the engines driving intellectual renewal and fresh cultural engagement in historically Orthodox societies like Romania, Greece and Russia.

But the Byzantine world is only part of the story. For most of their history, nearly all those churches that broke with Byzantium for doctrinal reasons or that had always been outside the political reach of the Empire lived as minorities in a Muslim society. It was not always a nakedly hostile environment, but it brought severe pressures to bear in all kinds of ways. Not least, it meant a continuing tradition of intellectual life conducted in the medium of non-European languages; only relatively recently has the world of Christian Arabic begun to receive the attention it merits. And the importance of these Christian communities in mediating classical Europe to the nascent Islamic culture is hard to exaggerate. No ‘clash of civilisations’ model will do justice to the complex interactions of all these universes of thought. A history of relative isolation and public marginality should not blind us to the substantive role of Christian minorities beyond the Roman and classical frontiers. And the same needs to be said about those churches like the Armenian and Ethiopian that did not live consistently as minorities in a non-Christian environment but experienced something of the same challenge in thinking and expressing their faith in the languages of cultures outside the ‘classical’ world. Looking at their history helps us make some better sense of the phenomena of marginal Christianities in the west, especially in the Celtic context.

Nor should we be lured into thinking that the schisms of the fifth to the eleventh centuries created hermetically sealed units of Christian discourse. Armenians, Byzantines and Latins participated in the same arguments in the Byzantine court; nearly all the churches of the east at one time or another faced difficult decisions about how far to go in rapprochement with Rome; the choices they made continue to affect relations between the modern churches in acute ways. Whether in the Council of Florence or in the embassy sent from Mongol Iran by Mar Yabh’allaha III to the courts of the west in the thirteenth

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century, there was always an uncomfortable sense of unfinished business about how to relate with those on the other side of doctrinal and political divisions. Modern ecumenism has roots in a large number of missions and negotiations in the past, and these essays will show something of the variety in that history.

In modern times, eastern Christianity has suffered once again from being the victim of an imposed minority status in many countries; the trauma of communist domination and persecution has indelibly marked the churches of eastern Europe. But at the same time, many of the most creative theological elements in contemporary western theology can trace their origins to eastern sources, thanks partly, though not exclusively, to the Russian diaspora. For both Roman Catholic and Reformed thinkers, the eastern world has opened new pathways which relativise, even if they do not always solve, the historic standoffs between diverse western concerns, and offer a different and often more flexible vocabulary. Throughout the eastern Christian world today, Byzantine and non-Byzantine, there is an upsurge of new thinking, new artistic energy (think of the extraordinary development in the last few decades of Coptic iconography), and *ressourcement* in the monastic life. The final chapter in this volume gives a clear picture of the vitality and the wide impact of this renewal. Despite the unhappy and often violent symbiosis in some contexts between Christian rhetoric and uncritical nationalism, despite the fresh difficulties of Christian minorities that have developed as a result of contemporary geopolitics and a high level of tone-deafness in the west to the needs of these minorities, there is plenty of vigour and sophistication. If it is a cardinal temptation of our time to indulge in crass and destructive stereotyping of both Christian and Muslim worlds, forgetting the variety and wealth of their histories, this book, written out of the most painstaking contemporary scholarship, will be an indispensable aid in resisting that temptation. It is an academic tour de force; but far more than a simple academic exercise.

Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury

Abbreviations

AA	Archives de l'Athos
AAE	<i>Akty, sobrannyye v bibliotekakh i arkhivakh rossiiskoi imperii arkheograficheskoiu ekspeditsiei imperatorskoi Akademii nauk</i>
AI	<i>Akty istoricheskie, sobrannyye i izdannyye arkheograficheskoiu komissiei</i>
B	Byzantion
BF	Byzantinische Forschungen
BMGS	Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies
Bsl	Byzantinoslavica
BZ	Byzantinische Zeitschrift
CA	Cahiers Archéologiques
CFHB	Corpus fontium historiae byzantinae
ChOIR	<i>Chteniia v Obshchestve istorii i drevnostei rossiiskikh pri Moskovskom universitete</i> (Moscow, 1845–1918)
CNRS	Centre national de la recherche scientifique
CSCO	Corpus scriptorum christianorum orientalium
CSHB	Corpus scriptorum historiae byzantinae
DOP	Dumbarton Oaks Papers
DOS	Dumbarton Oaks Studies
DOT	Dumbarton Oaks Texts
DTC	Dictionnaire de théologie catholique
JEclH	Journal of Ecclesiastical History
JThSt	Journal of Theological Studies
Miklosich and Müller	Miklosich, F. and Müller, J., <i>Acta patriarchatus constantinopolitani</i> , 2 vols. (Vienna: Carolus Gerold, 1860–62)
ÖAW	Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften
OCA	Orientalia christiana analecta
OCP	Orientalia Christiana Periodica
ODB	Oxford dictionary of Byzantium, ed. A. P. Kazhdan et al., 3 vols. (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1991)
PG	Migne, P. G., <i>Patrologiae cursus completus, Series graeca</i>
PLDR	<i>Pamiatniki literatury Drevnei Rusi XIV–seredina XV veka</i>

List of abbreviations

PLP	<i>Prosopographisches Lexikon der Palaiologenzeit</i> , 13 fasc. (Vienna: ÖAW, 1976–96)
PO	<i>Patrologia orientalis</i>
PSRL	<i>Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisei</i>
PSZRI	<i>Polnoe sobranie zakonov rossiiskoi imperii</i>
PVL	<i>Povest' Vremennykh Let</i> , ed. V. P. Adrianova-Peretts and D. S. Likhachev, 2nd edn rev. M. B. Sverdlov (St Petersburg: Nauka, 1996)
REB	<i>Revue des Études Byzantines</i>
Reg.	<i>Les registres des actes du patriarchat de Constantinople</i> , ed. V. Grumel, V. Laurent and J. Darrouzès, 7 vols. (Paris: Institut français d'études byzantines, 1932–91)
Rhalles and Potles	Rhalles, G. A. and Potles, M., <i>Σύνταγμα τῶν θεῶν καὶ ἱερῶν κανόνων</i> 6 vols. (Athens, 1852–59)
RIB	<i>Russkaia Istoricheskaia Biblioteka</i> (St Petersburg: Imperatorskaia arkhograficheskaia kommissiia, 1880), vi
RPK	<i>Das Register des Patriarchats von Konstantinopel</i>
RR	<i>Russian Review</i>
Sp	<i>Speculum</i>
Thomas and Hero	Thomas, J. and Hero, Angela, <i>Byzantine monastic foundation documents</i> , 5 vols. (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2000)
TM	<i>Travaux et Mémoires</i>