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978-0-521-68338-8 - The Cambridge Companion to Orthodox Christian Theology

Edited by Mary B. Cunningham and Elizabeth Theokritoff

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THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO
ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY

Orthodox Christian theology is often presented as the direct inheritor of the doctrine and tradition of the early Church. But continuity with the past is only part of the truth; it would be false to conclude that the eastern section of the Christian Church is in any way static. Orthodoxy, building on its patristic foundations, has blossomed in the modern period. This volume focuses on the way Orthodox theological tradition is understood and lived today. It explores the Orthodox understanding of what theology is: an expression of the Church's life of prayer, both corporate and personal, from which it can never be separated.

Besides discussing aspects of doctrine, the book portrays the main figures, themes and developments that have shaped Orthodox thought. There is particular focus on the Russian and Greek traditions, as well as the dynamic but less well-known Antiochian tradition and the Orthodox presence in the West.

Mary B. Cunningham is a lecturer in theology at the University of Nottingham. Her publications include *Faith in the Byzantine World* (2002).

Elizabeth Theokritoff is an independent scholar and translator, with particular interests in liturgical theology and theology of creation. She has lectured and led workshops widely and published numerous articles.

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*This volume is dedicated to the memory of Nicolas and
Militza Zernov, without whose labours such a book might
never have been commissioned – or would certainly have
looked very different.*

May their memory be eternal!

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Preface

Gone are the days when an occasional intrepid traveller would venture to Eastern Europe or the Levant and return with colourful tales of the beliefs and practices of the natives. Several Orthodox countries now belong to the European Union; there is an extensive body of Orthodox literature, both original and translated, available in Western languages; Orthodox theologians are to be found at many major Western universities. Yet the Orthodox theological tradition as a whole remains surprisingly little known. One could easily get the impression that the Christian East belongs to the realm of history.

The present volume aims to tell a different story. Building on its patristic foundations, Orthodox theology has blossomed in the modern period. This is true also of the still less well-known Oriental Orthodox (non-Chalcedonian) traditions, which fall outside the scope of this volume. These ancient Churches, with their very diverse histories and traditions, deserve a volume to themselves and cannot adequately be treated as an appendix to Chalcedonian Orthodoxy.

One can also not speak about Orthodox theology without referring to the Church Fathers; and even where the patristic background is shared by Christians of East and West, it cannot be assumed that the Fathers are read in the same way. Nevertheless, the predominant focus of this book will be on the Orthodox theological tradition as it is understood and lived today. Some basics of historical as well as geographical background are given in the introductory chapter. Following this overview, the book is divided into two parts. The first covers various aspects of doctrine, while the second introduces some of the main figures, themes and movements of ideas that have helped to shape Orthodox theology as it exists today. We have defined 'theology' broadly, so as to include aspects of doctrine that would more strictly be classed as cosmology, anthropology or ecclesiology. We also include areas that today would be categorised as 'spirituality'; this reflects a conviction that Orthodox theology cannot be separated from the Christian's effort to live the truth. On the other hand, it should be pointed

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out that 'Orthodox theology' is not synonymous with 'Eastern Christian thought'. The fascinating area of Russian religious philosophy therefore falls outside the proper scope of this volume, even though there will be several references to its influence.

It is our hope that this book will not only be informative about the specifics of Orthodox teaching, but also – and very importantly – convey the Orthodox understanding of what theology is: not an academic discipline or a set of philosophical propositions, but an expression of the Christian life of prayer, both corporate and personal, from which it can never be separated. We have tried to convey this approach to theology through the sequence of chapters. Part I begins with two chapters relating to the sources of theology, affirming the inextricable connection of scripture, tradition and the Church, especially the Church as worshipping community. Christian theology will always be grounded in scripture, but the starting point for understanding scripture is its use and interpretation in liturgy. Chapters 3–6 cover fundamental doctrinal themes: the Holy Trinity; the created order in relation to its Creator; the theological understanding of the human being as a creature in God's image; the doctrine of Christ and the understanding of salvation in Christ. The next four chapters (7–10) can be seen as dealing with sub-themes of Christology, exploring the implications of the Incarnation and the salvation brought thereby. We have placed 'eschatology' immediately after 'Christ and salvation' in order to emphasise that eschatology does not concern only the 'last things' in a chronological sense: the Church is interested in the 'last things' because it lives in the time inaugurated with the coming of the 'last Adam'. This 'inaugurated eschatology' is glimpsed in the Church, the body of Christ on earth (Ch. 8); and it is expressed in the icon, which reveals the transformation of human beings and the entire creation in the light of Christ's Incarnation (Ch. 9). The same eschatological vision informs the 'spiritual way' (Ch. 10), the practical path by which humans appropriate salvation as the divine image in each of us is restored to the likeness of God.

The second part of the book tries to give more of the context of Orthodox Christian theology and witness today. Inevitably, it is a collection of samplings with certain overlaps and it is far from comprehensive. Yet, disparate though these chapters are, they share a common theme: theology comes out of the experience of the Church. It may be the experience of the Church through the ages as it appropriates the work of the councils and Church Fathers (Ch. 11), or the experience of local Churches and communities as they bring the resources of Christian tradition to bear on particular historical circumstances. It may be the testimony of people of

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holiness, whose theological insights are shaped by ‘what their eyes have seen’ (cf. 1 Jn 1.1). We had planned to include a chapter on this aspect of Orthodox theology, but unfortunately this proved impossible. Perhaps there is a lesson here in the hiddenness of holiness, its unwillingness to trumpet its own contributions.

It is because of the Orthodox emphasis on the communal matrix of theology that we have decided not to single out a few outstanding figures to be the subject of separate chapters. This might be initially frustrating for the reader; but it avoids creating the impression of discrete schools of theological thinking. As the doctrinal chapters will testify, the Orthodox instinct is to focus on a synthesis rather than on individual strands of thought. For more systematic introductions to particular figures mentioned in this book, we would refer the reader to works such as *The Historical Dictionary of the Orthodox Church*,¹ *The Blackwell Dictionary of Eastern Christianity*² or *The Blackwell Companion to Eastern Christianity*.³

Part II does introduce some of the main theological figures, but against the background of broader movements of which they form part. These movements may be obviously international in scope, such as the rediscovery of the Church Fathers in which many Orthodox and Western Christians have been engaged (Ch. 12), or the revival in Russian émigré thought (Ch. 13) which has done much to define the face of Orthodoxy in the West. In other cases, we have focused for the sake of convenience on a particular local Church (Greece, Antioch, Russia), but the choice has been made precisely because their story is of more than local interest. Greek theology is increasingly known in the West, and holds a key position in the Balkans, where many theologians are Greek-educated. One can also see mutual influences and convergence of interests between theologians of the Russian émigré and Greek traditions; this is illustrated here with a study of the very topical theme of personhood. The chapter on Antioch reminds us that the challenge of living and bearing witness as a minority in a non-Christian society – an unwelcome novelty to Western Christians – has been the experience of many of the ancient Eastern Churches for most of their existence.

We conclude with two chapters suggesting some of the directions that Orthodox theology may take in the twenty-first century. Post-Communist Russia, home to most of the world’s Orthodox Christians, is shown to be a crucible for debate of quite novel questions about the place of the Church in modern society and the meaning of theology today. But the Orthodox presence in the West is also of increasing importance: the challenges

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that this raises for both Orthodox and Western Christians form the subject of the final chapter.

We have endeavoured to touch on a broad range of subjects and, as a result, treatment of important ideas is often tantalisingly brief. It is a matter of particular regret that there is no space to explore aspects of 'applied theology': approaches to ethical issues, engagement with science, questions of Church and society. Several of the chapters do, however, contain enough references to this aspect of Orthodox thinking to make clear its importance; and the select bibliography includes some further reading on this subject.

Our practice in transliterating Greek, Russian and Serbian names generally follows accepted conventions so as to distract the reader as little as possible. Thus, we have followed the general practice among patristic scholars of latinising Greek names such as Evagrius or Maximus the Confessor. With more modern figures, however, we try to give a phonetic transliteration of the name, unless it is widely used in English in another form (thus Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain, but Florovsky rather than Florovskii).

As Archimandrite Ephrem Lash points out in his chapter, the Orthodox Churches accept the Septuagint, or the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, as their scripture. We have therefore cited Psalms according to the numbers employed in the Septuagint, with the Hebrew numbers appended in brackets. In order to avoid confusion, we have used the names of Old Testament books familiar to readers from English translations of the Hebrew, such as 1–2 Samuel and 1–2 Kings instead of 1–4 Reigns; again, however, we have added the Greek names of books at the first citation of each.

We have endeavoured to include definitions of terms that might be unfamiliar. If a term is not defined when it is introduced, the reader's first recourse should be to the Glossary. Failing that, the Index may turn up passages where the term is explained more fully.

In the matter of 'inclusive language', we should clarify that many Orthodox authors, writing in English, are accustomed to using 'man' in an inclusive sense: this is equivalent to the Greek word 'anthropos', a word which, depending on its gender, may refer to human beings of both sexes. There are contexts in which one can just as well speak of humans singly ('the human person'), or as a plurality ('humans') or as a collective ('humanity'). But none of the circumlocutions for 'man' fully conveys that sense, so important to Orthodox anthropology, of humankind personified as one unified creature – the one who falls in Adam, says 'yes' to God in the Virgin Mary and is raised from the dead in Christ.

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It only remains to express our gratitude to all who have worked with us on this volume. This includes above all our contributors for their painstaking work and gracious patience throughout the editing process, as well as Dr Katharina Brett of Cambridge University Press, for suggesting the project and for her unfailing, helpful guidance. We would also like to thank Dr Peter Gilbert for compiling the index, Dr George Theokritoff for his help with the map, and many others who have contributed help and support in a variety of ways, including Drs David and Mary Ford, Zaga Gavrilović, Dr Tamara Grdzeldze, Dr Valerie Karras, and Dr Michel Nseir.

Despite the efforts of so many, this volume is not without its limitations, for which we take full responsibility. It is our hope, however, that the reader will be able to look beyond them and so discover some of the riches of the Orthodox Christian tradition.

Notes

1. M. Prokurat (ed.), *The Historical Dictionary of the Orthodox Church* (Lanham, MD, and London: Scarecrow Publishers, 1996).
2. K. Parry, D. J. Melling, D. Brady, S. H. Griffith and J. F. Healey (eds.), *The Blackwell Dictionary of Eastern Christianity* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1999).
3. K. Parry (ed.), *The Blackwell Companion to Eastern Christianity* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007).

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A chronology of the Eastern Churches

(All dates are AD (*anno domini*) or CE (Christian era))

c. 64–313	Persecution of Christians by Roman emperors and governors
2nd–3rd century	Gnostic and heterodox sects challenge orthodoxy
c. 130–200	St Irenaeus of Lyons
c. 185–254	Origen of Alexandria
c. 251–356	St Anthony of Egypt, founder of monasticism
c. 296–373	St Athanasius the Great
c. 300	Armenia adopts Christianity (first Christian state)
312	Conversion of Emperor Constantine I
313	Edict of Milan ends persecution of the Church
325	First ecumenical council at Nicaea formulates Creed in opposition to Arianism
c. 350	Church of Georgia founded
329/30–89/90	St Gregory of Nazianzus, also known as ‘the Theologian’
c. 330–79	St Basil the Great
c. 330–95	St Gregory of Nyssa
346–99	Evagrius of Pontus, teacher of asceticism and prayer
c. 347–407	St John Chrysostom
c. 350	Church of Georgia founded
381	Second ecumenical council, Constantinople, completes formulation of Nicene Creed
late 300s	Macarian Homilies
c. 400 – after 446	Diadochus of Photike, ascetic theologian
431	Third ecumenical council, Ephesus, counters Nestorianism: rejected by Assyrian Church of the East (sometimes called ‘Nestorian’)
451	Fourth ecumenical council, Chalcedon, counters ‘Monophysitism’: rejected by all ‘non-Chalcedonian’ Churches
476	Last Western Roman emperor deposed by Ostrogothic general, Odoacer
c. 500	writings of (ps-)Dionysius the Areopagite
537	Church of Hagia Sophia (Constantinople) rebuilt by Justinian

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- 553 Fifth ecumenical council, Constantinople, affirms unity of Christ's person; recognition of five patriarchal sees; Constantinople given second place after Rome
- 555 Death of Romanos the Melodist, hymnographer
- c. 570–649 St John Climacus, Abbot of Sinai, author of *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*
- c. 580–662 St Maximus the Confessor
- 589 *Filioque* added to Creed in Spain at the Third Council of Toledo
- 630s Rise of Islam; Muslim conquests of Damascus (635), Jerusalem (638), Alexandria (642)
- c. 650–5 – 750 St John of Damascus: hymnographer, theologian, defender of the icons
- 676 St Isaac the Syrian, spiritual teacher, appointed Bishop of Nineveh
- 680–I Sixth ecumenical council, Constantinople, affirms two wills of Christ
- 692 Quinisext Council 'in Trullo': canons on sacred art
- 730–87; 815–43 Iconoclasm
- 759–826 St Theodore of Stoudios: hymnographer, theologian, defender of the icons
- 787 Seventh ecumenical council, Nicaea, affirms theology of images
- 843 Restoration of the icons by Empress Theodora
- 858–67, 878–86 St Photius, as Patriarch of Constantinople
- 863 Baptism of the Bulgars
- 864–85 Missionary work of Sts Cyril and Methodius among Slavs
- 917 Patriarchate of Bulgaria established
- 949–1022 St Symeon the New Theologian: abbot, theologian, poet
- 963–4 Great Laura monastery founded on Mt Athos
- 988 Baptism of Rus': Prince Vladimir of Kiev
- 1027–1107 Peter of Damascus, monastic theologian
- 1054 'Great Schism': anathemas exchanged between Rome and Constantinople
- 1095–9 First Crusade: Crusaders occupy Jerusalem and Antioch and install Latin hierarchs
- 1204 Constantinople sacked by Fourth Crusade
- 1204–61 Latin rule in Constantinople
- 1237 Tartar invasion of Russia
- 1255–65 – 1337 St Gregory of Sinai, Hesychast, teacher of the Jesus Prayer
- 1274 Council of Lyons: failed attempt at reunion between Constantinople and Rome
- c. 1296–1359 St Gregory Palamas, Archbishop of Thessaloniki, defender of the Hesychasts

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| c. 1314–92 | St Sergius of Radonezh, founder of Holy Trinity monastery near Moscow |
| c. 1322–90 | St Nicolas Cabasilas, lay theologian, Hesychast |
| 1340–96 | St Stephen of Perm, scholar and missionary to the Zyrians |
| 1341, 1347, 1351 | Councils in Constantinople uphold Gregory Palamas's teaching |
| 1346 | Patriarchate of Peć (Serbia) established by St Sava |
| 1380 | Battle of Kulikovo: Russian prince St Dimitri Donskoi defeats Tartars |
| 1389 | Battle of Kosovo: Serbian prince St Lazar defeated by Turks |
| 1433–1508 | St Nil Sorsky, Hesychast, 'Non-Possessor' |
| 1438–9 | Council of Florence–Ferrara: official end of schism between Rome and Eastern Churches (but overturned in 1484) |
| 1439–40 – 1515 | St Joseph of Volokolamsk, abbot, 'Possessor' |
| 1448 | Autocephaly of Church of Russia |
| 1453 | Constantinople falls to Turks |
| 1459 | Serbia falls to Turks |
| 1517 | Ottoman Turks occupy Syria and Egypt |
| 1572–1638 | Cyril Loukaris, author of Calvinist-leaning 'Confession' |
| 1573–81 | Lutheran scholars in correspondence with Patriarch Jeremias II |
| 1589 | First Patriarch of Russia elected |
| 1596 | Union of Brest: creation of uniate church in Ukraine; establishment of lay 'brotherhoods' in Kiev to defend Orthodoxy |
| 1597–1646 | Peter Mogila, Westernising metropolitan of Kiev |
| 1625–72 | Various 'Orthodox confessions' |
| 1652 | Liturgical reforms of Patriarch Nikon of Moscow: 'Old Believer' schism |
| 1721 | Moscow Patriarchate abolished by Peter the Great |
| 1722–94 | St Paisius Velichkovsky, translator of the <i>Philokalia</i> into Slavonic (1793) |
| 1724 | Schism in Antioch: 'Melkites' unite with Rome |
| 1749–1809 | St Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain: publication of the <i>Philokalia</i> and the <i>Rudder</i> |
| 1759–1833 | St Seraphim of Sarov, monk, spiritual father |
| 1794 | Russian mission to Alaska: St Herman |
| 1821 | Greece liberated from Ottoman empire |
| 1840s | 'Slavophile' movement in Russia; Alexei Khomiakov, 1804–60 |
| 1850s | Ottoman massacres in Syria prompt emigration of Christians |
| 1853–1900 | Vladimir Soloviev, religious philosopher |
| 1861 | Russian mission to Japan: St Nicholas (Kasatkin) of Tokyo |

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late 19th century	Greek/Arab/Russian parishes established in Australia, North America
1871–1944	Sergius Bulgakov, economist, speculative theologian, ecumenist
1882–1937	Pavel Florensky, theologian, scientist
1891–1909	Uniate parishes in USA brought into Orthodox Church by Archpriest Alexis Toth
1893–1979	Georges Florovsky, patristic theologian, Church historian
1899	Meletius Al-Doumani elected Patriarch of Antioch; Arab hierarchy restored in Antioch
1917	Russian Church Council: Patriarchate of Moscow restored
1926	Founding of St Sergius Institute of Orthodox Theology, Paris
1938	Founding of St Vladimir's Seminary, New York
1942	Founding of Orthodox Youth Movement, Patriarchate of Antioch
1946	Orthodox Church of Uganda received into Patriarchate of Alexandria
1953	Founding of Syndesmos (World Fellowship of Orthodox Youth)
1960s	Theological revival in Greece; monastic revival on Mt Athos
1964–5	Meeting between Patriarch Athenagoras of Constantinople and Pope Paul VI of Rome; formal lifting of anathemas of 1054.
1970	Russian Metropolia in North America granted autocephaly by Moscow as Orthodox Church in America
1982	Orthodox Church of Ghana received into Patriarchate of Alexandria
1989	Eastern Orthodox – Oriental Orthodox Dialogue issues agreed statement
1992	Church of Albania revived: Archbishop Anastasios (Yannoulatos) elected primate

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Abbreviations

ANF	A. Roberts and J. Donaldson (eds.), <i>Ante-Nicene Fathers, The Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325</i> , 10 vols., rev. edn A. Cleveland Coxe (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1995). Also available at: www.ccel.org
<i>c.</i>	<i>circa</i> ; about
CSCO	Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium (series)
CUA	Catholic University of America
CWS	Classics of Western Spirituality (series)
GCS	Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte, Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs 1897– (a series)
<i>GOTR</i>	<i>Greek Orthodox Theological Review</i>
<i>JTS</i> , n.s.	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i> , new series
LXX	Septuagint (The Greek Old Testament)
MECC	Middle East Council of Churches
MJO	Mouvement de la Jeunesse Orthodoxe
NPNF	Philip Schaff, Henry Wace <i>et al.</i> (eds.), <i>Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, A Select Library of the Christian Church</i> , Series 1–2, 13 and 14 vols., repr. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1995. Also available online at: www.ccel.org
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version, <i>The Holy Bible</i>
PG	Patrologia Graeca
PL	Patrologia Latina
RSV	Revised Standard Version, <i>The Holy Bible</i>
SC	Sources Chrétiennes (series)
<i>sed.</i>	Latin <i>sedes</i> , 'seat' or 'held office'
SPCK	Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge
SVS	St Vladimir's Seminary, Crestwood, NY
<i>SVTQ</i>	<i>St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly</i>
WCC	World Council of Churches

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Map of the Eastern Orthodox Churches