

# Theology on the Web.org.uk

*Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible*

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](https://paypal.me/robbradshaw)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

---

A table of contents for *The Baptist Quarterly* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_bq\\_01.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bq_01.php)

## The Orthodox Greek Church.

LAUSANNE will see in August a world conference on Faith and Order, for which long and careful preparation has been made. From the Eastern Churches there may attend representatives of the Churches of Rumania, Serbia, Bulgaria, Russia, Georgia and Armenia; but more ancient and more picturesque will be representatives of the Œcumenical Patriarchate, the Patriarchate of Alexandria, the Patriarchate of Antioch, the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, the Church of Cyprus and the Church of Greece. The last of these indeed has a separate technical existence only from last century; but these names recall us to apostolic days when Paul went from Jerusalem to Antioch, Cyprus, and Greece, when Apollos came from Alexandria, when the first gospel closed with a command for Œcumenical preaching.

For four hundred years the Greek churches were the backbone of Christianity; only with Jerome and Augustine did the Latin churches begin to compare in importance, while the Syriac or Persian Church was later still in its splendid missionary career. At Antioch, Ephesus, Constantinople and throughout Asia Minor, heroes are too many to cite, while the names of Irenæus in Lyons, Hippolytus in Rome, Origen and Athanasius in Alexandria, show how far the Greek influence extended. The early great Councils were of Greeks; Nicæa, Constantinople, Ephesus, Chalcedon, saw eight of these recognized as Œcumenical; not till 1123 A.D. was any important council held outside Greek lands.

The emperors at Constantinople played such a strong part in controlling the Greek Church, that large dissenting Churches arose in Egypt and Syria, which attracted most of the nationals, and left in the State Church few beyond the Greek colonists and officials, who were nick-named Melchites, Imperialists. After the days of Cyril, very few Alexandrians cared about the Patriarch of Alexandria in that capacity, though often he was Governor also. The Greek Patriarch of Jerusalem was little better off. The Greek Patriarch of Antioch maintained his importance rather longer. The Greek Patriarch of Constantinople alone remained of real eminence, though as he lived under the shadow of the Emperor he was under constant State supervision. Since the constant metaphysical debates had split the Greeks into rival Churches, these four dignitaries of the State Church assumed the title of Orthodox, which they retain to this day.

The Moslems were welcomed by the rival Churches, which were assured of toleration and fair play. It then became evident that in the East, outside the Greek-speaking lands, the peoples

followed almost entirely the Coptic and Syriac and Armenian patriarchs. With these we are not concerned, but only with the four Orthodox Greek Patriarchs, who have tried to keep up a constant succession, with fair success considering the numerous depositions and murders. The conquests of the Crusaders introduced new complications, and sets of Latin patriarchs. Curiously enough, the Moslem capture of Constantinople elevated the Patriarch there, who was officially recognised by the Sultans as Œcumenical, the political head of the "Roman Nation," that is, the Greek Christians within the Turkish dominions. As the flocks of his ecclesiastical colleagues dwindled, and learned to speak Arabic, the three other patriarchs tended to desert their posts, and come to live in Constantinople.

The extreme complexity of the situation fifteen years ago may be seen in the case of Antioch. There are many Patriarchs of Antioch; one for the Monophysites, one for the Maronites, one for the Melchites, one for the Catholic Syrians, one for the Latins, besides the Orthodox Greek Patriarch. Not one of these rivals lives in Antioch itself; the Greek resided at Damascus, and before the French took control he may have had a flock of some 250,000, about as many people as live in Shropshire.

The Patriarch of Alexandria has a following fewer than the inhabitants of the Isle of Wight, so that till lately he had no bishop under him. Much more shadowy is the archbishopric of Sinai, with just one important convent and a few score of wandering Arabs.

The Patriarch of Jerusalem really does, or did, live in the city whence he takes his title; and there is a good income both from endowments and from pilgrims. The census of the country taken by the British showed 73,026 Christians of all sorts. Now there is a Latin patriarch at Jerusalem, a Melchite patriarchal vicar at Jaffa, a Maronite patriarchal vicar at Jerusalem, an Armenian patriarch at Jerusalem, a Jacobite maphrian of Jerusalem at Mardin, with his vicar in the city, a Coptic bishop of Jerusalem at Cairo, and an Anglican bishop in Jerusalem: it would seem that of the Orthodox in the old Greek Patriarchate there are barely six thousand. Most of his people speak Arabic, but the best paid posts are held by Greeks. Of these Orientals, in the very nest of Christianity, three remarks are made by a Scot, long resident on the lake of Galilee:—As a whole, these Christian churches are corrupt and superstitious: the priests are often illiterate and degraded; their chief duty is not the care or cure of souls, but the management of the hospices, shrines, and other buildings associated with their religion, and attendance at the endless formal ceremonies and processions carried on in a spirit of coarse materialism. If Jews turn to them,

they are presented with a metaphysical plan of salvation, and theological theories as forbidding as the Talmudic law. There is a sickening superstition and an absence of a sense of sin.

The Church of Cyprus, independent of any patriarch for nearly 1500 years, may claim continuity from the days of Barnabas. It has about as many members as there are people in Dorsetshire.

The Œcumenical Patriarch at Constantinople was till lately a far more important personage. In the days of our Charles I., Cyril Lukar held that post till he was executed for treason: a man educated at Venice and Padua, rector at Wilna, Patriarch of Alexandria whence he sent the splendid Codex now in the British Museum, influenced at Constantinople by an emissary from Geneva, where he had printed a version of the Bible made by himself into modern Greek: he tried to reform his Church on Calvinistic lines, but failed. None of his successors have been specially noteworthy. Now at Lausanne a treaty has been made, and the Turks are determined to have a homogeneous State, free from entanglement with any Church. They abolished the Moslem Caliphate and the Christian Patriarchate; and as Constantine V. could not reconcile himself to this loss of status, they deported him. From their dominions they deported or massacred the Christians generally. And since Constantine's death, the *locum tenens* is outside the city so long occupied, and the number of people who look up to him is very uncertain.

For most Greeks to-day are in the kingdom of Greece, and there has been for scores of years a Church of Greece, not governed by any patriarch. Greeks in every part of the world look up in practice to His Holiness the Metropolitan Chrysostom, at Athens. Their Holinesses the Patriarchs of Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem, and the *locum tenens* of the Œcumenical Patriarchate, are like the Habsburgs and the Hohenzollerns, heirs to great traditions.

If the bishop of Argyll from the midst of Presbyterians of whom many speak Gaelic, with the bishop of Tuam from the midst of Roman Catholics, of whom many speak Irish, with the bishop of St. Davids from the midst of Calvinistic Methodists, of whom many speak Welsh, together with a representative of the Primate of All England, who does not live at Canterbury, go to Lausanne; then although their followers are incomparably more numerous, they will quite easily understand the position of the four Greek dignitaries. And it is a matter of great satisfaction to many Anglo-Catholics, that their orders are now recognised by most of these Patriarchs of ancient lineage, with the Apostolic Succession at Antioch from the days of Paul.

W. T. WHITLEY.