

EASTERN ORTHODOX CHURCHES

GENERAL STATEMENT¹

History.—The Eastern Orthodox Catholic Churches, known historically as the “Eastern Church,” and in modern times as the “Greek Orthodox Church,” the “Eastern Catholic Church,” the “Holy Orthodox Catholic Apostolic Church,” and popularly as the “Greek Church,” are the modern representatives of the Catholic Church of the Byzantine Empire. As the distinction between the Eastern and Western Roman Empires developed, there also grew up differences between the ritual and doctrinal positions held in the church in its original eastern homelands and those which developed in the daughter church in the Latin West and centered in the Roman Papacy. Toward the ninth century these became still more evident and culminated, in 1054, in complete separation between the Patriarch or Bishop of Rome and the four Eastern Patriarchs. The Eastern Church at that time comprised four ecclesiastical units, the Patriarchates of Constantinople, Jerusalem, Antioch, and Alexandria. These were and are coordinate in authority, though honorary precedence was and is accorded to the Patriarch of Constantinople as holder of the ecclesiastical throne of the imperial city of the Eastern Empire, just as the Pope of Rome had been similarly honored as holder of the ecclesiastical throne of the imperial city of the earlier, world-wide, Roman Empire.

With the capture of Constantinople by the Turks in 1453, and the assumption by the Turkish Government of the right of approval in the election of the Patriarchs, there developed a diversity of ecclesiastical organization. The Patriarchs of Jerusalem, Antioch, and Alexandria, while still according a certain precedence of honor to the Patriarch of Constantinople, preserved their ecclesiastical independence. With the development of the Russian Empire, the Russian Church, hitherto nominally subordinate to the Constantinople Patriarchate, organized its own ecclesiastical government, first, about the year 1589, in the form of a Russian Patriarchate, and later, in 1721, under the supreme authority of a Holy Governing Synod, with headquarters at St. Petersburg (now Leningrad). Similarly, after Greece had become independent, the Church of Greece established, in 1833, the Holy Synod of Greece at Athens. Various other metropolitan sees have also claimed and acquired independence, including those of Serbia, Roumania, Bulgaria, Albania, and Cyprus. Since the World War, independent national Orthodox Churches have been proclaimed in Poland, Estonia, Latvia, Finland, and Czechoslovakia; but the permanent status of these is not yet definitely agreed upon.

These different organizations, although independent of each other ecclesiastically, agree in doctrine, and, essentially, in form of worship, and together constitute what is called the “Eastern Orthodox Catholic Churches.”

Of these churches, seven have been represented in the United States by regular church organizations. These are the Russian Orthodox, the Greek Orthodox (Hellenic), the Serbian Orthodox, the Syrian Orthodox, the Albanian Orthodox, the Bulgarian Orthodox, and the Roumanian Orthodox. Only one of these, the Russian Orthodox Church, had a general ecclesiastical organization previous to

¹This statement was furnished by Rev. Boris R. Burden, editor, *The Orthodox Catholic Review*.

the World War. To that Russian Mission all the Orthodox Churches in America were nominally subject, although they had their own administrators under the Russian archbishop.

Following the World War and the Russian Revolution the various racial and linguistic groups broke away from the Russian jurisdiction in America and set up separate national missions in this country corresponding to the national churches in their ancestral homelands. Rival groups and leaders appeared corresponding to the political factions and divisions in the chaotic European situation.

The Russians have four different factions each claiming that its prelate is the true Russian Archbishop of America. The Greeks have two and the Syrians three divisions in similar situations. The Serbians have a bishop governing part of their parishes in this country. In every group there are numerous independent parishes and clergy which refuse to recognize any of the rival bishops. Each of the national churches or missions has reported separately, but in each group there are many local churches not included, owing to the chaotic conditions prevailing at the present time.

In an effort to unite all the Orthodox Catholic people in America and develop a single American organization of the church in this country, as well as to provide for the next American generation of Orthodox people, the five Russian bishops in America, headed by the Metropolitan Platon, ordered the establishment of an independent American Orthodox Catholic Church under the name of "The Holy Eastern Orthodox Catholic and Apostolic Church in North America." This body has been chartered by both civil and ecclesiastical authorities in America (as a religious corporation under the laws of the State of Massachusetts, December 1, 1927) and is proceeding gradually to unite under its North American Holy Synod the members and clergy of various racial and national origins who desire to enter an independent American Orthodox Catholic Church. Its North American Holy Synod has published in English and foreign languages its charter, constitution, and other important documents and also publishes in English a bimonthly organ, *The Orthodox Catholic Review*, from its temporary headquarters in Brooklyn.

Doctrine.—The doctrine of the Eastern Orthodox Churches is founded on the Holy Scriptures, the Holy Traditions, and the dogmatic decisions of the seven Ecumenical Councils. The Holy Scriptures are interpreted strictly in accordance with the teachings of the seven Ecumenical Councils and the Holy Fathers. The Niceo-Constantinopolitan Creed is held only in its original authoritative form without the Roman-Latin addition of the "Filioque" phrase. Recognizing Christ as the only head of the earthly as well as the heavenly church, they do not accept the dogma of the Pope as the special representative or Vicar of Christ on earth, and the infallible head of His earthly church. According to their teaching, infallibility belongs to the whole assembly of true believers, to the "Ecclesia," or Church, which is represented by its council legally called together and whose decisions are confirmed by the consensus of the church.

They believe in the procession of the Holy Ghost from the Father alone; honor Mary as the Mother of God, and honor the nine orders of angels and the saints; do not define as dogma the doctrine of the immaculate conception of the Virgin Mary, but hold the true Catholic doctrine of the virgin birth of Christ. They reject the doctrine of the surplus merits of the saints and the doctrine of indulgences. They reverence relics of the saints, pictures of holy subjects, and the cross, but forbid the use of carved images. They accept seven sacraments, baptism, anointing (confirmation or chrismation), communion, penance, holy orders, marriage, and holy unction. Baptism of either infants or adults by three-fold immersion is recognized as the only proper form, although other forms are accepted of necessity or in the case of converts who have previously been

baptized. The sacrament of anointing with "chrism," or holy oil, is administered immediately after that of baptism and the chrismated infant or adult is thereafter a full communicant in the Eucharist.

The doctrine of transubstantiation is taught. In the Eucharist, leavened bread is used, being consecrated and soaked in the consecrated chalice and then received by all members of the Eastern Orthodox Churches after confession and absolution. Children under 7 years of age, however, receive the sacrament without confession. Holy unction is administered to the sick, and not alone to those in danger of death. The Church rejects the doctrine of purgatory, but believes in the beneficial effect of prayer for the dead by the living and for the living by the dead. It rejects the doctrine of predestination and considers that for justification both faith and works are necessary.

In the Eastern Orthodox Catholic Church, membership has two distinct but frequently confused meanings. All persons who have been baptized in the church and received the sacrament of chrismation (confirmation) which immediately follows baptism, are communicant members of the church, participating in the sacrament of the Eucharist. Parish membership, however, is counted more frequently by families than by communicants, because the head of each family is the voting member of the parish congregation. This fact gives rise to confusion and uncertainty of statistics of all Eastern Orthodox Churches.

Organization.—There are three orders of the ministry—deacons, priests, and bishops. The deacons assist in the work of the parish and in the service of the sacraments. Priests and deacons are of two orders, secular and monastic. Marriage is allowed to candidates for the diaconate and the priesthood, but is forbidden after ordination. The episcopate is, as a rule, confined to members of the monastic order. A married priest, should his wife die, may enter a monastery and take the monastic vows, and is eligible to the episcopate. The parishes are, as a rule, in the care of the secular priests.

Monks and nuns are gathered in monastic establishments or are scattered out in missionary work. In some monastic colonies the members live in communities, while in others they lead a secluded, hermitical life, each in his own cell. There is but one order, and the vows for all are the same, obedience, chastity, prayer, fasting, and poverty.

The organization for the general government of the different Eastern Orthodox Churches varies in different countries. In general, there is a council at the head of which, as president, is a bishop elected by the ecclesiastical representatives of the people. Historically, and at present in some cases, this presiding bishop is called the Patriarch, and has special colleagues and officers for the purpose of governing his flock. The largest or most important of the bishoprics connected with the patriarchate, or synod, are called "metropolitan sees," though the title now carries with it no special ecclesiastical authority. In early times, both the clergy and the laity of the local churches had a voice in the election of bishops, priests, and deacons, but of late that right has been much restricted, and at present the priests and deacons are usually appointed by the bishops, and the bishops are elected by the clergy.

The service of the Eastern Orthodox Churches is solemn and elaborate. It is essentially that of the earlier centuries of Christianity, and is most fully and completely observed in the monasteries. There are no sculptured images and no instrumental music, although there are pictorial representations of Christ, the apostles and saints, and scenes in Bible history. The most important service is the divine liturgy, the chief part of which is the celebration of the Eucharist. There are three liturgies, those of St. John Chrysostom, St. Basil the Great, and St. Gregory, the last called the "Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts," for which the holy gifts are prepared at a preceding service. There are no so-called "silent

liturgies" or "private masses," and two liturgies are not allowed to be performed in the same church simultaneously, nor can a liturgy be performed by the same priest, or on the same altar, twice a day. A "corporal," otherwise known as an "antimins," a cloth with a particle of the holy remains of some saint sewed into it, and especially blessed by a bishop for every church, is necessary to the performance of the liturgy. Moreover, a priest may perform it only when he is fasting. Besides the liturgy, the church has vespers, vigils, matins, hours, and special prayers for various occasions and needs. The several services named consist of readings from the Old and New Testaments, supplicatory prayers, thanksgiving, glorifying hymns, etc.

Statistics.—The churches grouped under Eastern Orthodox Churches in 1926, 1916, and 1906 are listed below, with the principal statistics as reported for the three periods. It will be noted that three churches presented in 1916 and 1926—Albanian, Bulgarian, and Roumanian—were not reported in 1906.

Certain small groups or movements which have sprung from the Old Catholics in America must not be confused with the Eastern Orthodox Churches. Some of these Old Catholics use the word "Orthodox" in their names (e. g., African Orthodox Church), but none of them has any relation with Eastern Orthodox Catholic Churches either in orders or sacraments.

SUMMARY OF STATISTICS FOR THE EASTERN ORTHODOX CHURCHES, 1926, 1916, AND 1906

DENOMINATION AND CENSUS YEAR	Total number of churches	Number of members	VALUE OF CHURCH EDIFICES		EXPENDITURES DURING YEAR		SUNDAY SCHOOLS	
			Churches reporting	Amount	Churches reporting	Amount	Churches reporting	Number of scholars
1926								
Total for the group.....	446	259,394	397	\$11,789,108	423	\$2,044,415	198	14,195
Albanian Orthodox Church.....	9	1,993	5	66,000	9	14,850	.....	.....
Bulgarian Orthodox Church.....	4	937	3	32,000	3	5,230	1	55
Greek Orthodox Church (Hellenic).....	153	119,495	131	5,011,718	145	958,809	73	5,796
Roumanian Orthodox Church.....	34	18,853	30	621,500	32	92,124	18	1,370
Russian Orthodox Church.....	199	95,134	187	4,883,515	195	838,453	90	5,770
Serbian Orthodox Church.....	17	13,775	16	272,000	15	67,978	7	497
Syrian Orthodox Church.....	30	9,207	25	902,375	24	66,971	9	707
1916								
Total for the group.....	301	249,840	263	3,576,884	283	856,968	151	9,118
Albanian Orthodox Church.....	2	410	.....	.....	2	2,482	.....	.....
Bulgarian Orthodox Church.....	4	1,992	4	18,500	4	5,051	.....	.....
Greek Orthodox Church (Hellenic).....	87	119,871	59	1,115,464	74	230,288	17	1,088
Roumanian Orthodox Church.....	2	1,994	1	18,000	2	11,520	2	123
Russian Orthodox Church.....	109	99,681	164	2,137,713	165	549,776	116	6,739
Serbian Orthodox Church.....	12	14,301	10	106,700	12	29,353	8	653
Syrian Orthodox Church.....	25	11,591	25	180,507	24	28,498	8	515
1906								
Total for the group.....	411	129,606	75	964,791	.....	.....	7	509
Greek Orthodox Church.....	334	90,751	19	385,800	.....	.....	4	371
Russian Orthodox Church.....	59	19,111	46	484,371	.....	.....	1	75
Serbian Orthodox Church.....	10	15,742	8	62,460	.....	.....	1	13
Syrian Orthodox Church.....	8	4,002	2	32,160	.....	.....	1	50

ALBANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

STATISTICS

The data given for 1926 represent 9 active Albanian Orthodox churches, all reported as being in urban territory. The total membership was 1,993, comprising 1,135 males and 858 females. The classification of membership by sex and by age was reported by all of the 9 churches, 8 of which reported members under 13 years of age.

For this body no parsonages or Sunday schools were reported.

The membership of the Albanian Orthodox Church is of two types, communicant members, consisting of all persons, including infants, baptized and confirmed in the church, and parish members, consisting of the families of the congregation, the head of the family being the voting member.

Comparative data, 1926 and 1916.—Table 1 presents, in convenient form for comparison, a summary of the available statistics of this church for the censuses of 1926 and 1916.

TABLE 1.—COMPARATIVE SUMMARY, 1926 AND 1916: ALBANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

ITEM	1926	1916
Churches (local organizations)	9	2
Increase over preceding census:		
Number.....	7	
Per cent ¹		
Members	1,993	410
Increase over preceding census:		
Number.....	1,583	
Per cent.....	386.1	
Average membership per church.....	221	205
Church edifices:		
Number.....	5	
Value—Churches reporting.....	5	
Amount reported.....	\$66,000	
Average per church.....	\$13,200	
Debt—Churches reporting.....	3	
Amount reported.....	\$19,500	
Expenditures during year:		
Churches reporting.....	9	2
Amount reported.....	\$14,850	\$2,482
Current expenses and improvements.....	\$14,650	\$2,200
Benevolences, missions, etc.....	\$200	\$282
Average expenditure per church.....	\$1,650	\$1,241

¹ Per cent not shown where base is less than 100.

State tables.—Tables 2, 3, and 4 present the statistics for the Albanian Orthodox Church by States. Table 2 gives for each State the number and membership of the churches and the membership classified by sex. Table 3 gives for Massachusetts, and for other States in combination, the number and membership of the churches for the censuses of 1926 and 1916, together with the membership for 1926 classified as under 13 years of age and 13 years of age and over. Table 4 shows, for 1926, the value of church edifices, the debt on such edifices, and the

church expenditures, showing separately the amounts expended for current expenses and improvements, and for benevolences, etc. Separate presentation in Table 4 is also limited to Massachusetts, the only State in which three or more churches reported the principal items shown (values or expenditures), in order to avoid disclosing the financial statistics of any individual church. The States omitted from these tables can be determined by referring to the complete list which appears in Table 2.

TABLE 2.—NUMBER AND MEMBERSHIP OF CHURCHES, AND MEMBERSHIP BY SEX, BY STATES, 1926: ALBANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

GEOGRAPHIC DIVISION AND STATE	Number of churches	Number of members	MEMBERSHIP BY SEX		
			Male	Female	Males per 100 females ¹
United States.....	9	1,993	1,135	858	132.3
New England:					
Massachusetts.....	7	1,358	730	628	116.2
Middle Atlantic:					
Pennsylvania.....	1	550	340	210	161.9
West North Central:					
Missouri.....	1	85	65	20	-----

¹ Ratio not shown where number of females is less than 100.

TABLE 3.—NUMBER AND MEMBERSHIP OF CHURCHES, 1926 AND 1916, AND MEMBERSHIP BY AGE, 1926, BY STATES: ALBANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

[Separate presentation is limited to States having 3 or more churches in either 1926 or 1916]

STATE	NUMBER OF CHURCHES		NUMBER OF MEMBERS		MEMBERSHIP BY AGE, 1926		
	1926	1916	1926	1916	Under 13 years	13 years and over	Per cent under 13
United States.....	9	2	1,993	410	693	1,300	34.8
Massachusetts.....	7	1	1,358	250	478	880	35.2
Other States.....	2	1	635	160	215	420	33.9

TABLE 4.—VALUE OF CHURCH PROPERTY, AND CHURCH DEBT, BY STATES, 1926: ALBANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

[Separate presentation is limited to States having 3 or more churches reporting value of edifices and expenditures]

STATE	Total number of churches	Number of church edifices	VALUE OF CHURCH EDIFICES		DEBT ON CHURCH EDIFICES		EXPENDITURES DURING YEAR			
			Churches reporting	Amount	Churches reporting	Amount	Churches reporting	Total amount	For current expenses and improvements	For benevolences, missions, etc.
United States.....	9	5	5	\$66,000	3	\$19,500	9	\$14,850	\$14,650	\$200
Massachusetts.....	7	3	3	49,000	2	18,500	7	9,750	9,750	-----
Other States.....	2	2	2	17,000	1	1,000	2	5,100	4,900	200

HISTORY, DOCTRINE, AND ORGANIZATION ¹

HISTORY

The churches of this communion represent in America what is held to be the oldest existing race in Europe, the descendants of the Macedonians, Illyrians, and Epirotes, who were the offspring of the Pelasgians.

The various invasions by Romans, Goths, Huns, Serbians, Bulgars, Normans, and Turks have made little change in social customs, language, or traditions, and the present-day Albanians represent their early ancestors more exactly, probably, than does any other nation in Europe. They are noted for their independence, persistence, strong sense of honor, caution, hospitality, respect for womanhood, bravery, loyalty, and keen appreciation of poetry; and they have produced some of the most noted leaders of history: Alexander the Great, Pyrrhus, Scanderbeg, Ali Pasha of Janina, Mehmet Ali Pasha of Egypt, the Italian statesman, Krispi, and others.

The Albanian language, belonging to the Indo-European group, is older than the classical Greek, has many literary qualities, and is of great interest to scholars.

The early religion of the Albanians had many features older even than the earliest traces of the Greeks and Romans. Christianity reached them in the first century, but made little progress until the fourth. They were under the Greek Patriarchate of Constantinople, which refused the use of the Albanian vernacular in the services, with the result that the church had little hold on the people; and when the Turks came, their conception of power and their military character appealed to the mountaineers, and the great majority became Moslem. In the north and south, along the Adriatic, portions became Christian, those in the north, termed Gheg, being connected with the Roman Catholic Church, and those in the south, termed Tosk, with the Orthodox Greek Church. At present about two-thirds of the Albanians are Moslem, and the remaining one-third are about equally divided between the Orthodox Greek Church and the Roman Catholic Church. Both spiritually and ceremonially the three classes have much in common.

Albanian emigration to America is of recent origin, the result of the political unrest and strife of the whole region. It is estimated that there are about 10,000 Albanians in the United States who have come from Albania, besides those of Albanian origin who have come from the settlements of Greece and Italy. There were more, but since Albania has gained her liberty and independence many have gone back.

As ecclesiastical distinctions are not emphasized, the Albanians in the United States have organized national, educational, and musical societies and clubs, of which the most important are the Albanian Federation—*Vatra*, the "Hearth"—and the "Sons of Albania," both having their headquarters in Boston, Mass.

DOCTRINE AND ORGANIZATION

This church is affiliated with the Russian Orthodox Church and has its headquarters in Boston, Mass.; it has branches in Philadelphia, St. Louis, in Southbridge, Worcester, and Natick, Mass., in Jamestown, N. Y., etc. It follows the doctrine and ritual of the Orthodox Church, the only difference being that it officiates in the Albanian language.

These churches recognize as their bishop the Right Rev. Monsignor Theofan S. Noli, a graduate of Harvard University, who in 1924 was elected prime minister of Albania. In his absence, they are under the spiritual guidance of the archbishop of the Russian Orthodox Church.

¹ This statement, which is substantially the same as that published in Part II of the Report on Religious Bodies, 1916, has been revised by the Very Rev. Mark J. Kondili, administrator of the Albanian Orthodox Churches in the United States, and approved by him in its present form.