

# OUR 'POST-ECCLESIOLOGICAL' AGE

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## **Introduction**

With the sixteenth century there began a new era in the history and theology of the Church – and of Christianity – which for reasons that will be discussed below, we can call the 'post-ecclesiological' age. Its beginning was marked by the Reformation (1517), though many preliminary signs appeared much earlier, especially in the ecclesiology that was developed at the time of the Crusades (1095-1204).

The historical and theological evidence of the last five centuries shows a radical difference between the current era and the completely different ecclesial practice that preceded it. It actually represents a new conception of the Church, hitherto unknown, that marks the end of ecclesiology as lived and developed by the Church during her first fifteen centuries.

Following this clear deterioration in ecclesiology, which came about through events and not because of some evolution towards a 'post-ecclesiological' age, it was natural enough for various new ecclesiologies to emerge. These are, in order of their historical appearance: rite-based<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The term *rite* refers to the various ancient liturgical traditions that have continued to co-exist within the Roman Catholic Church and on which are based various overlapping ecclesial entities.

ecclesiologies (Catholic), confessional ecclesiologies (Protestant), and finally ethnically based ecclesiologies (Orthodox).

These three ecclesiologies, are essentially of the same nature: that is, they are established according to aggressive, almost militant, principles. Moreover, they have dominated Church life since their appearance and also determined the statutory texts that regulate the existence and functioning of all Churches since that day.

We are now in a position to re-examine the causes that brought about these ecclesiological deviations. While very different in their origin and outlook, they resemble one another, and also continue to coexist, though without creating any communion or unity between them.

A key common denominator is what I shall call 'co-territoriality', i.e.: separate Churches sharing the same territory. This is an extremely serious problem found throughout the second millennium – the same millennium that has faced numerous insoluble issues of an exclusively ecclesiological nature. By contrast, the first millennium, which had to deal with Christological issues, resolved most of them. In other words, when Christological problems appeared during the first millennium, the Church was able to engage with them and resolve them in a conciliar manner, but we have not been able to do the same with the ecclesiological problems that have arisen in the second millennium.

The three ecclesiologies with which are concerned are the following: (1) the ecclesiology of the Crusades (thirteenth century); (2) the ecclesiology of the Reformation (sixteenth century); and (3) the ecclesiology of Orthodox ethnophyletism (nineteenth century).

### **The Ecclesiology of the Crusades (thirteenth century): from rupture of communion to schism**

As an ecclesiological event, the reciprocal breaking of communion in 1054 concerned only two Patriarchates: the Patriarchate of Rome and the Patriarchate of Constantinople. However, this rupture of communion extended to the other Patriarchates of the East after the Crusaders described it as a schism. It became clear only later that this term pointed to a radically new situation, one that, from an ecclesiological and canonical point of view, was able to legitimise the establishment of new Churches, claiming to be Patriarchates, on the territories of the pre-

existing Patriarchates and Churches of the East. Rupture of communion, by itself, could not justify such a procedure.

In effect, the political movement of the Crusades gave a new twist to the rupture of communion of 1054. The proclamation of schism (i.e. of a canonical and ecclesiological situation where part of the body of the Church is considered to be detached from the whole and consequently non-existent in a given location) gave a new direction to the ecclesiological order it created. Thus two new categories of Church were created alongside the two pre-existing Patriarchates of the East: (1) the Latin Patriarchates that were established first in Jerusalem at the end of the First Crusade in 1099, followed later by the Latin Patriarchate of Antioch in 1100; and (2) the non-autocephalous<sup>2</sup> Catholic Church of Cyprus, established in 1191. This fact by itself (if we accept that we have a rupture of communion here and not a schism) gives birth implicitly – but also officially – to the ecclesiological problem of co-territoriality.

However, this unprecedented situation did not stop there. Alongside these Latin ecclesial entities, there were also established rite-based Patriarchates and Eastern Catholic Churches (Maronite, Melchite, Syrian Catholic and so on), all of them under the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate and Pope of Rome, but outside his normal territorial jurisdiction and on one and the same territory.

This jurisdiction was ‘beyond the borders’ – though still in a situation of rupture of communion – since the new Latin and rite-based Patriarchates were being created in the canonical territories of the Eastern Church. It thus took the form of an isosceles triangle, because, although the Patriarchates were all equal amongst themselves, they were all subordinate to and dependent upon the Patriarchate of Rome. This ecclesiological aberration, previously unheard of, has been maintained to this day, as witnessed by the existence of two different types of Church in the same territory, and also of two totally independent Codes of Canon Law not communicating with each other.

It was during this same time that a new conception of the primacy of the Patriarch and Pope of Rome appeared – one quite different from

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<sup>2</sup> See our article ‘The time of “xenocracy” in Cyprus (1191-1960). A historico-canonical note’, in *Hydor ek Petras* [Crete], Vol. XII-XVI (2000), pp. 205-209 (in French).

the ecclesial experience of the first millennium. The Patriarch and Pope of Rome became *primus inter inferiores*, with a universal primacy of jurisdiction, while in the ecclesiology and praxis of the Church of the first millennium, the first Patriarch (the President) of the ecclesial communion of the five Patriarchate, the conciliar pentarchy that was established during the Fourth Ecumenical Council at Chalcedon (451), was *primus inter pares*. In other words, a structure of pyramidal type came to replace a structure that was more like a constellation. This, however, is a different issue, and is beyond the scope of the present text.

From the thirteenth century onwards, the ecclesiology of the Catholic Church introduced for the first time in Christian history an ecclesiological form (the establishment of a Church in a particular place) that exhibited 'dual' co-territoriality. On the one hand, it shares the same territory with Patriarchates with which it may or may not be in communion; and on the other hand, it exists on the same territory as other Churches which use a different rite. The latter, however, are in complete communion with – or, as it is usual to say, 'united' with – Rome, though they all co-exist together as ecclesial bodies and entities in one and the same land. Thus we end up, from the end of the Middle Ages, having Catholic Churches of different rites on the same territory.

This is what one might call much more precisely an 'internal' co-territoriality. But we also end up with a Latin Roman Catholic Patriarchate together with other rite-based Roman Catholic Patriarchates at a place where a Patriarchate already exists (for example, in the case of Jerusalem). This one might call 'external' co-territoriality.

This 'dual' co-territoriality, which resulted from the political situation created by the Crusades, became the rule, and perpetuated itself with the same structures until the Reformation. From the thirteenth to the sixteenth century, then, we have on the one hand ecclesiastical 'mono-territoriality' and mono-jurisdiction in Western Europe on the territory of the Patriarchate of Rome; while on the other hand we find the encouragement by the latter of ecclesiastical co-territoriality, followed by the exercise of 'beyond the borders' multiple jurisdiction, on the territories of other Churches of the East. In these areas, from that point onwards, both 'internal' and 'external' co-territoriality are established and co-exist. In these new ecclesial 'modes of being', one

might reasonably detect the beginnings of the development of a global ecclesiology – starting in particular just after the Reformation.

Despite the political pressures of the time, however another position persisted in the Christian West: a theologically based position driven by the vision of re-establishing ecclesial communion and resolving the ecclesiological problem. Two Councils, the Council of Lyons (1274) and of Ferrara-Florence (1438-39), gathered together bishops who were in rupture of communion though not in a situation of schism (otherwise there would be no point in summoning such Councils). The continuing settlement of monks from the West on Mount Athos until the beginning of the fourteenth century also clearly shows that the desire for an ecclesiological solution to the rupture of communion was still alive, despite all the politically motivated co-territorial behaviour, which could still be confronted at the time.

### **The Ecclesiology of the Reformation (sixteenth century)**

It was the Reformation that caused the emergence of co-territoriality on the territory of the Patriarchate and Church of Rome. Indeed, in the sixteenth century, this ecclesiological aberration was brought for the first time to Central and Western Europe. Here it fragmented the Patriarchate of Rome both internally and territorially, just as the Churches of the East had previously been internally fragmented. Here, it is worth remembering<sup>3</sup> how co-territoriality emerged on a *confessional* basis, and how it contributed to this ecclesiological problem. It was at that time that the term ‘denomination’ appeared in the realm of ecclesiology.

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<sup>3</sup> See our article: ‘The oppositional relationship between the locally established Church and the ecclesiastical “Diaspora” (Ecclesiological unity faced with “co-territoriality” and “multi-jurisdictionalism”)', in *Synaxis*, Vol. 90 (2004), pp. 28-44 (in Greek), and in Archimandrite Grigorios D. Papathomas, *Ecclesiologico-Canonical Questions (Essays on the Orthodox Canon Law)*, Thessaloniki-Katerini, Epektasis Publications (Series: Nomocanonical Library, N° 19), 2006, Chap. III, pp. 107-144 (in Greek); and in Archimandrite Grigorios D. Papathomas, *Essays on Orthodox Canon Law*, Florence, Università degli Studi di Firenze Facoltà di Scienze Politiche ‘Cesare Alfieri’ (Coll. ‘Seminario di Storia delle istituzioni religiose e relazioni tra Stato e Chiesa, Reprint Series’, N° 38), 2005, Chap. II, pp. 25-50 (in French).

The ecclesiological experience of the first millennium was that, in a given location, the unique canonical criterion permitting the establishment and existence of a 'local' or 'locally established' Church was that of exclusive territoriality and a single ecclesial jurisdiction. Because the Reformation distanced itself from the Church of the West from whence it came (not from a spatial point of view, but by its 'mode of being') it introduced a new and determining criterion for the establishment of a Church. This was something that until that time was ecclesiological and canonically inconceivable. Indeed, the newly formed ecclesial communities of different confessions, whose existence at that time was entirely autonomous, needed an ecclesiological structure. This, however, could be based neither on the ecclesial experience of the Church as it had been until then, nor on the institutional structure of the local Church or diocese. The reason for this was simple: these communities began to exist and coexist on a territorial region where a Church was already present and already endowed with a territorial identity.

It was crucial, however, to find a way, on the one hand, for these communities to be Church (which is in fact why the Reformation took place); and on the other hand, to have some element to differentiate them from the pre-existing Church, with which they no longer wished to be identified. The use of any local designation would not only cause confusion, but would also require the adoption of equivalent institutional structures (bishops, dioceses, territorial names). It was therefore not possible to do what was done after the Crusades.

At that time a schism had already been declared, and this legitimised the exact reproduction of the pre-existing structures and designations of the Patriarchates and Churches of the East.

The Reformation, however, neither outwardly proclaimed a schism with the Western Church from whence it came, nor did it embark upon the ecclesial procedure of breaking communion or anything similar. The Reformation sought an ecclesiological foundation, but because it *was* a reform, sought to differentiate itself absolutely from the existing Church.

In Lutheranism and Calvinism, i.e. in traditional Protestantism where dogma is of prime importance, we see a dependence of the Church exclusively on the 'Confession of Faith', such as the Confession of Augsburg in 1530. Thus the Reformation chose, disastrously but also

of necessity, to describe itself adjectivally on the basis of the confession of each Protestant leader, thereby avoiding a local designation. Thus the need for 'confessionalism' in ecclesiology was established, as well as the 'confessionalisation' of the Church, which took place first within Protestant areas, and then outside them. In short, the break up of ecclesiological unity in the West led to the emergence of confessionalism: it determined a designation of the newly formed Churches, that was no longer territorial. There was no reference to a place, but an adjectival description, such as the Lutheran Church, the Calvinist Church, the Methodist Church, the Evangelical Church, and so on.

To sum up, then, the Reformation, even if this was not its principal aim, enlarged and systematised co-territoriality (the sharing of territory by different Churches defined by different confessions) as a form of ecclesial existence. Subsequently, however, its fragmentation into a variety of different confessional Churches led to the same symptomatic alienation from a true ecclesiology. With striking similarity, the same characteristic ecclesiological symptom of dual co-territoriality appeared here as well. 'External' co-territoriality was present in the co-existence of the various confessional Protestant Churches alongside the Catholic Church from which they came. 'Internal' co-territoriality came about since several Protestant Churches could co-exist on the same territory and in the same city without thereby achieving the fullness of communion attained by an ecclesial body in a given place. This was contrary to the Pauline ecclesiology of the New Testament – in spite of the fact that Scripture is the sole basis of Protestant ecclesiology.

There is, therefore, no such thing as 'mono-confessionalism' within the Protestant family. Although the movement in the beginning was united and unique, there was soon fragmentation and proliferation on confessional lines. And so, in spite of the fact that Protestantism is based on Pauline ecclesiology and proclaims vigorously that Pauline ecclesiology is the only New Testament truth, it carries within itself the confessional ecclesiology of co-territoriality, which not only eliminates any trace of the Pauline and New Testament vision of the establishment of a Church at a given place, but also undermines the constantly repeated position of Scripture as the sole basis of its theology.

### **The Ecclesiology of Ethnophyletism (19th century)**

For Orthodox Christians, things are even more complex. We will limit ourselves to just two aspects of the problem in Orthodox ecclesiology:

(1) the existence of internal co-territoriality (Churches of different rites within the same Patriarchate existing on the same territory), to which is added multi-jurisdictionalism; and

(2) the refusal to practice external co-territoriality (the existence of a Patriarchate in a territory where another Patriarchate is already established). We will begin with the latter since this was historically the first to appear.

#### *3.1 'External co-territoriality': 1054 as rupture in communion, not schism*

First, despite the contradictory views that divide Orthodox Christians today, the year 1054, as we have said, was not characterised as a schism, but rather as a rupture of communion. Furthermore, the Orthodox Church has never declared it to be a schism. As St John Chrysostom said, 'all lasting schisms lead to heresy', and consequently to complete detachment from the ecclesial body. Moreover, if a schism *had* been declared, the Orthodox Church would have had to take the same ecclesiological actions as the Church of Rome after the Crusades and establish an 'Orthodox Patriarchate of Rome'.

This is something which, with complete self-consistency, it refrained from doing throughout the last millennium and, happily, continues resolutely to refuse to do. For the same reason, it did not accept the three joint Councils of the second millennium: Lyons (1274), Ferrara-Florence (1438-39), and Brest-Litovsk (1596) – summoned during the same century as the start of the Reformation. It was the Council of Trent (1545-1563), however, which gave the definitive *coup de grace* to the politics of Church unity promoted up to that point. From the seventeenth century onwards, disruption of ecclesiological structure within the Catholic Church, together with the religious wars in the West, created other priorities, and things took a different turn. This was clearly shown during the Second Vatican Council (1962-64).

It is an error, therefore, when Orthodox Christians use the term 'schism' to refer to the events of 1054. The refusal of the Orthodox Church to declare the 'rupture of communion' of 1054 to be a 'schism',



together with its refusal to establish an 'Orthodox Patriarchate of Rome', reveals that it lives in hope of *re-establishing communion*. For this reason, and only for this reason, it does not practice external co-territoriality [i.e. two Patriarchates existing on the same soil]. We ought to recognise then, that the Pauline ecclesiology (but also the conciliar and patristic ecclesiology of 'a single Church in a given place') are clearly preserved in the Orthodox Church and its ecclesiology.

### 3.2. 'Internal co-territoriality' and 'multi-jurisdictionalism'

The same does not apply, however, as regards 'internal' co-territoriality. On this point, Orthodox Christians have been even more culpable than Catholics and Protestants in ecclesiological error, since, apart from co-territoriality, they also practice co-jurisdiction as well as multi-jurisdictionalism. We pretend to be in communion without there being actual communion since, as we shall explain, extreme care is taken to privilege ethnic realities over ecclesiological communion. This shows precisely that contemporary Orthodox ecclesiology is not without its systematic distortions, which are revealed not only in Orthodox ecclesiological practice across the world today, but also appear explicitly and juridically in the statutes of Orthodox 'national' Churches.

Just two examples of statutory measures with non-ecclesiological content will suffice to highlight the scale of the existing ecclesiological problem: one from the Statutes of the Orthodox Church of Cyprus and one from the Russian Orthodox Church.

(1) 'The members of the Orthodox Church of Cyprus are:

- all Cypriot Orthodox Christians, who have become members of the Church through baptism, and are *permanent residents* of Cyprus, as well as
- all those of Cypriot origin who have become members of the Church through baptism, and are currently residing abroad' (Statutes of the Church of Cyprus, Article 2, 1980).

(2) 'The jurisdiction of the Russian Orthodox Church extends to:

- people of Orthodox faith residing in the USSR (1988) [residing on the canonical territory of the Russian Orthodox Church (2000)], as well as

- people who reside abroad and voluntarily accept its jurisdiction' (Statute of the Church of Russia, I, § 3, 1988 [2000]).

These articles are representative and share three principle non-ecclesiological characteristics: they distort the meaning of autocephaly; they insist on expansion beyond their actual boundaries; and by referring constantly to 'diaspora' they refuse to recognize the canonical existence of other locally established Churches.

(1) The jurisdiction of these Churches extends itself deliberately and in the first instance to *individuals* – just as in the ecclesiology of the Reformation – and not exclusively to territories. Thus it is possible to affirm that the exercise of ecclesiastical jurisdiction over individuals – by itself and by definition – gives these Churches the right to penetrate the canonical boundaries of other locally established Churches. And yet we all know that autocephaly, according to Pauline ecclesiology, is granted in a given location, to a territory with explicit boundaries and on purely geographical criteria (these days usually a state) – and not to a nation.

It is important to realise that the meaning of autocephaly derives essentially from the New Testament, and not from the Old. The Old Testament identifies the chosen people with the nation, whereas the New Testament does not. As a result, the jurisdiction of a locally established autocephalous Church is exercised over a specific territory and never over an entire nation – and still less over a nation 'scattered abroad', as we are accustomed to say. Its authority extends only, therefore, to individuals, and not over 'canonical territory'. The latter is a concept that is only invoked in self-defence against 'intruders', who, in conformity with *their* Statutes, plan to establish an *external co-territoriality* on another's 'canonical territory'. That is, the idea of 'canonical territory' is used to prevent external ecclesiastical interventions on one's own ecclesial territory by some other jurisdiction (or 'confession') that is acting according to the same principles. It becomes necessary when a Church, on the basis of its Statutes, practices such ecclesiastic interventionism on the canonical territory of other Churches.

(2) The statutes cited above declare that the Churches concerned are unwilling to limit the exercise of their jurisdiction to territories within their canonical boundaries, as they should from an ecclesiological point

of view: not only because they are both locally established Churches, but also because the principle of autocephaly, which determines their ecclesiological and institutional existence, demands it. Instead, they insist on their ability to expand beyond their canonical boundaries, since their own Statutes give them this right.<sup>4</sup> In ecclesiological practice, this is called 'institutional interference' and, even more important, 'institutional and statutory confirmation of co-territoriality'. In other words, this is perceived as a flagrant attempt by an institution to affirm the legitimacy of co-territoriality in ecclesiology.

(3) Most importantly, however, these Churches, when referring to territories *outside* their boundaries, knowingly and on purpose, see outside their canonical territory only *diaspora*. Thus they fail to acknowledge the canonical existence of other locally established Churches, which are nevertheless just as legitimate and canonical as they are. That is, the statutory reference to *individuals* obliterates the elementary canonical distinction between 'canonical territories' and 'territories of the *diaspora*', thereby creating not only an 'internal co-territoriality' – this time with a statutory basis – but also another anti-ecclesiological phenomenon, a universal jurisdiction of an ethnic nature.

This newly-formed construct (just as in the case of the Catholic Church of the Middle Ages) founds a universal ecclesiology, but strictly limited this time to a national (or even nationalistic) level. In fact, it brings about the formation of numerous universal Orthodox nationalist ecclesiologies that are in competition with one another.

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<sup>4</sup> With the same mindset the Patriarchate of Moscow has easily kept its recent promises, given everywhere (Western Europe, Estonia, ROCOR, etc.) to provide a 'large (sic) ecclesiastical autonomy'. A recent event explains this mindset. Four documents were published concerning the restoration of unity between the Patriarchate of Moscow and ROCOR. From these published documents, it appears that the current leaders of ROCOR have abandoned all previous grievances against the Patriarchate of Moscow. In exchange for thereby recognising the Patriarchate of Moscow's jurisdiction throughout the world, ROCOR has, 'by economy', obtained the right of 'self-administration', allowing it to exist as a specific ecclesial entity in the various parts of the world where it is established, in parallel to the diocesan structures of the Patriarchate of Moscow already existing on these same territories. (*SOP*, No. 300 (2005), pp. 21-22).

Despite their inherent contradiction, these Statutes of the Churches of Cyprus and Russia manage to introduce a double ecclesiological-canonical system for the exercise of their ecclesiastical jurisdiction, one that is unacceptable from an ecclesiological point of view.

(1) Internally, within the boundaries of the body of the locally established Church, they give priority to 'canonical territory', i.e. to territoriality and to mono-jurisdictionalism.

(2) Externally, outside the boundaries of the locally established Church, they claim by Statute jurisdiction 'beyond their boundaries', i.e. they affirm co-territoriality and multi-jurisdictionalism.

This in itself constitutes an alteration and corruption of the ecclesiology of the Church and changes it to a 'do-it-yourself' basis. The ecclesiology of the Church of the New Testament, of the canons and of the Fathers bears no relation whatsoever to the Statutes in question – and *vice versa*. In this way, we confirm the saying that underlies the secular priorities of Orthodox Christians: 'Siamo primo Veneziani e poi Christiani.' ('We are first of all Venetians and only then Christians')

It has nevertheless become quite common for the Churches of countries of Orthodox tradition to provide themselves with statutory and legislative texts that they consider to be the ecclesiastical equivalent of the Constitution and Civil Code of their State (the Slavs, for example, speak of an *Ustav*). These regulations determine the norms for the hierarchical governance of the Church (usually there is a limited Holy Synod, something that is not always canonical) and measures of a judicial nature that seek to do the job better than the canons transmitted by the on-going Tradition of the Church. It must be said that the apparent professionalism of the texts is illusory. They add nothing significant to the canons and cover the inspired nature of the canonical structure of the Church with a vain appearance of systematic rationality. The canons of the Church are the explication of a Tradition in response to particular circumstances.

'The fullness of time has come',<sup>5</sup> and we must realise that the statutory ecclesiology of the various Orthodox 'national' Churches is deeply problematic. The deficiency of their Statutes is not so visible

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. Gal 4: 4.

inside these countries, although the canonical innovation of an ethnic 'canonical territory' does suggest the likelihood of a fair amount of disorder in countries situated 'outside' the traditional territorial Churches, which we call, wrongly, the diaspora.

The deficiency of these Statutes lies also in the fact that they contain elements that are not only ethnic but also confessional, juridical and above all non-canonical and non-ecclesiological. They are, in the point of view they take, more like the pages of national-political manifesto than a reflection of the ecclesiology and theology of the Church. These twentieth-century Statutes once more witness to the 'Babylonian captivity' of Orthodox theology, this time a prisoner of a dominant national and State ideology. They bear witness to its transformation into an ethno-theology that the Church has herself given birth to and which has ended up as an ethno-ecclesiology that is the principal Orthodox characteristic of the this post-ecclesial age. To be sure, it is not just a simple juridical concept that characterises this age, but the realities that the term reflects, where one may discern something more profound: an ecclesiastical ethno-culturalism.

As participants in this process for reasons that today are known and obvious to all, the Orthodox of our era still blame the Western Crusades. They are unable to recognise that their ecclesiological stance, both statutorily and institutionally, follows in the footsteps of the Crusaders and their ecclesiology. An ecclesiological – and not ethnic – view of the cases of co-territoriality, e.g. Estonia, Moldavia or the Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), is enough to demonstrate the ecclesiological and canonical confusion which rules in Orthodox circles today.

### *3.3 The question of Eucharistic unity of the Church as locally established*

In essence, the Church has always been eucharistic and, as far as geographical areas are concerned, territorial, in the expression of its identity and its presence in history. Pauline ecclesiology, as well as the whole Patristic ecclesiology which followed, has never described a 'local' or 'locally established' Church in any other way than by a geographical name. The defining criterion of an ecclesial body has always been its

location, and never a racial, cultural, ritual, national or confessional category. Space is in fact the most inclusive category in our daily lives.

We have – and still have – a Church in a place, a 'local' Church or a 'locally established' Church (e.g. the Church which is at Corinth (1 Cor 1:2; 2 Cor 1:1), the Church of Galatia (Gal 1:2), the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, the Patriarchate of Rome, the Church of Russia, etc.), but the use of 'Church' preceded by a qualitative adjective (e.g. a Corinthian Church, a Galatian Church, a Roman Church, a Russian Church, etc.) has never previously existed as it exists today. And this is because, when we say, for example, 'the Church as it exists at Corinth, in Galatia, at Rome, in Russia, etc.', we always refer to the one and only Church, established at different locations. Whereas, if we say 'Corinthian, Roman, Russian etc' it is not obvious that we are always referring to the same Church, since it is necessary to describe it using an adjective (an ethnic or confessional category) in order to define it and to differentiate it from some other (Serbian, Greek, etc.) Church. So we introduce the same problem as when – as we are accustomed to do – we say 'Evangelical', 'Catholic', 'Anglican' or 'Lutheran' Church, thus defining those Churches by their confessional nature.

The Lutheran Church, for example, having lost its local canonical basis for reasons which were confessional and related to the expression of its identity, resorted to other forms of self-definition. In the same way, within the territory of the Orthodox *diaspora*, while we cannot possibly say 'the Church of Serbia of France', which would be ecclesiologically totally unacceptable - because it would cause total confusion between the Churches - we can instead, for purely ethnic reasons relating to the expression of its identity, quite easily say – as we do, not only orally but also in institutional and statutory texts – 'the Serbian Church in France', or 'the Russian Church in Estonia'.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Extract from our article in *Synaxis*, Vol. 90 (2004), pp. 32-33; in *Contacts*, t. 57, n° 210 (2005), pp. 102-103; and in Archimandrite Grigorios D. Papathomas, *Essays on Orthodox Canon Law*, Chap. II, pp. 29-30.

The conclusion we can draw from this brief ecclesiological analysis of adjectival designations is that we can have one – and only one – Church in Corinth, only one Church in Galatia, and only one Church in Jerusalem. These are not, however, three different Churches, but *one* Church, one and the same Church, the Body of Christ, which is found in Corinth, Galatia and Jerusalem.

This means that there are not, and cannot be, any ‘sister Churches’ as separate ecclesial bodies, but one unique Church incarnated in different locations. In an ecclesiological context, the word ‘sister’ is unwarranted, since it creates two bodies where only one exists. Such a designation does not exist in the ecclesiology of the first millennium. The use of such a term presupposes and implies unexpressed confessional or cultural differences within the one indivisible Body of the Church.

In precisely the same way, we do not have a Russian Church, a Bulgarian Church, a Jerusalem Church; these would be three Churches and not one. On the contrary, we have *one* Church, one and the same Church, the Body of Christ, found in Russia, Bulgaria, and Jerusalem. This explains why each ethno-ecclesiastical Statute presents a distorted perspective rather than a communion of locally established Churches, as was previously the case with the universally accepted canons of the Church, which were the same for everyone.

#### **4. Ecclesiological principles at work in our age: rite-based, confessional, territorial**

The principles that govern the three ecclesiologies discussed above have a number of elements in common. For the Catholics, the adjectival designation of the locally established Church stems from the its rite, i.e. the designation of a particular Church as ‘Maronite’, ‘Melchite’, ‘Greek Catholic’, ‘Uniate’, and so on. Similarly we find the Protestants describing themselves in terms of confession of faith: that is as ‘Lutheran’, ‘Calvinist’, etc. By exact analogy, the same happens with the Orthodox national Churches, where the messianic character of the nation (another form of confession of faith!) consciously or subconsciously prevails. At the same time we see an emotional and often perverse dependency of the Church upon the nation and the dominant national ideology. From this dependence upon the Nation-State the adjectival

designation follows naturally for each Church: 'Serbian', 'Romanian', 'Russian', and so on.

This new and previously unknown phenomenon of adjectival designation can be explained by the fact that subconsciously, since the ecclesiological centre of gravity has moved from being territorial to being ethnic, or, in the West, ritualist or confessional, we have replaced the local designation with an adjectival designation that corresponds to our divergent ecclesiological experience. We are thus being driven by precisely the same need for self-definition that motivates the use of confessional adjectival categories. As far as ecclesiology is concerned, however, there is no such thing as a 'ritualist' or 'confessional' Church or, in the corresponding Orthodox case, a 'national' and 'ethnic' Church.

Even though terms such as 'the Church of Romania' or 'the Romanian Church' may appear to be equivalent, and even though the difference may seem superficial, there is a real and significant difference between using the name of a place and the use of an adjectival epithet. These usages reflect two different conceptions of the Church. So far as their actual content is concerned, however, the chasm separating them is truly vast, as vast as is the chasm between what is 'ecclesiological' and what is 'non-ecclesiological'.

### **5. The post-ecclesiological age: seeking a solution**

These three divergent ecclesiologies, which developed from the thirteenth to the twentieth century, have essentially led the Church into a post-ecclesiological age, in which we now live. We seek superficial solutions, whether through Councils like Vatican II, which proposed an increase in ecumenism, or through increasing efforts to federalise the Protestant Churches, or even by the fruitless attempt to summon a pan-Orthodox Council, which has been in preparation, to no avail, for almost half a century. It is certain that the true solution will neither be ritualist, nor ecumenist, nor confessional, nor federal – and it will certainly not be ethnic and multi-jurisdictional. It can only be ecclesiological and canonical, and this is perhaps why it seems to be so distant (if not utopian) in today's age of Christian modernism that remains woefully non-ecclesiological and multi-jurisdictional.



To this we can add that the Reformation imposed co-territoriality. From then on co-territoriality became the only ecclesiological situation for everyone, a fact that is unanimously accepted. Indeed it became a constitutive element of every locally established Christian Church and Confession. And so today it constitutes the basic common characteristic of the ecclesiologies of all the Christian Churches.

(1) For the Catholic Church, for example: in Jerusalem there are five Catholic Patriarchates, all coexisting and governed by two distinct Codes of Canon Law. Uniatism is part of the same ecclesiological problem, as are as Rome's tenacious efforts to maintain its existence.

(2) Protestant Churches multiply in the same areas and across the world, trying to solve the problem through federalisation.

(3) For the Orthodox locally established Churches, one example will demonstrate the problem. In Paris there are six co-existing Orthodox bishops, with equivalent or synonymous – sometimes even homonymous – overlapping ecclesiastical jurisdictions (despite this being explicitly forbidden by the ecclesiology of the First Ecumenical Council (325)<sup>7</sup> and the Fourth Ecumenical Council (451),<sup>8</sup> and thus the local Churches reflect completely the co-territoriality mentioned above.

In addition there is the ecclesiology of the World Council of Churches (WCC), for which pluralistic coexistence constitutes an essential ecclesiological criterion; and let us not forget the world-wide communion of Anglican Churches, the Armenian Churches, and the self-styled 'Orthodox Catholic Church of France (ECOF)'.

The seventeen different Old Calendarist Churches in Greece exhibit, to an astonishing degree, the same characteristic symptom of dual co-territoriality (both external, with respect to the Orthodox Church of Greece, and internal, with respect to the relations these seventeen homonymous and self-proclaimed 'True (sic) Orthodox Churches of

<sup>7</sup> Canon 8 of Nicaea I: '[...] For in one church there shall not be two bishops.'

<sup>8</sup> Canon 12 of Chalcedon: 'It has come to our knowledge that certain persons, contrary to the laws of the Church, having had recourse to secular powers, have by means of imperial prescripts *divided one Province into two, so that there are consequently two metropolitans in one province; therefore the Holy Synod has decreed that for the future no such thing shall be attempted by a bishop, since he who shall undertake it shall be degraded from his rank.*' (author's italics)

Greece' have with each other); and the 'Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia (ROCOR)' also enjoys a world-wide ecclesiastical jurisdiction and therefore, by definition, co-territoriality.

Consequently, the problem the Churches face is not primarily ritualist, confessional or ethnic. It is above all an ecclesiological problem, a problem of the ontological communion of the Churches in Christ.

### **Concluding remarks**

Never before during the two-thousand-year history of Christianity has there been such a broad and far-reaching violation of the Church's ecclesiological principles as during the 'post-ecclesiological age' of the last eight centuries. The blame lies with all of us: Catholics, Protestants and Orthodox Christians. The organisation of the Churches according to a code of canon law, a confession, or national statutes has repeatedly and deliberately ignored – and continues to ignore – the ecclesiological and canonical tradition stemming from the vital ecclesiastical praxis of the Church of Christ as inherited from the New Testament, the Ecumenical and Local Councils, and the Fathers of the Church. Instead it draws its inspiration from the conditions of this secular and 'post-ecclesiological' age, without allowing for any possibility or showing even the slightest will to find our way back from 'whence [we] are fallen' (Rev 2:5).

If these conclusions are correct, we can say that the Crusades in effect created a new ecclesiastical situation that since then has influenced – or rather, imposed itself on – all later ecclesiology. The Reformation then aggravated the problem of ecclesial co-territoriality, which had already been present since the time of the First Crusade (1099).

The main characteristic of this new ecclesiological situation was the establishment of Churches that were 'co-territorial' instead of being 'territorial' – that is, Churches that are not in full communion, but rather coexist with other Churches in the same place. The basis of these Churches is ritualist, confessional or ethnic, and above all non-ecclesiological. It is the ritualist, confessional or ethnic foundation that defines and dictates not only their underlying ecclesiology, but their Codes of Canon Law, the official texts of the Protestant confessions, and the Statutes of the Orthodox 'national' Churches. They characterise the current 'post-ecclesiological' age, which is now in full flower.

This brief investigation shows that, in the modern era, Orthodox ecclesiology has been more heavily influenced by Protestant ecclesiology in its self-definition, than by Catholic ecclesiology. This is due to the latter's monolithic ecclesiastical structure on a global scale, which was brought about by the break in communion of 1054 and the subsequent development of an ecclesiology centred on a single Patriarchate extended across the world. This may also explain the easy co-existence of Protestants and Orthodox Christians in the World Council of Churches (WCC), which can be thought of as the crowning achievement of the post-ecclesiological age.

The post-ecclesiological age can be schematised as follows:

Table 1: Ecclesiology during the post-ecclesiological age

Catholic Church	Poly-ritualism and co-territoriality	<p><b>External:</b> establishment of Churches on the territories of other Churches (external co-territoriality)</p> <p><b>Internal:</b> Churches of a ritualist character; the acceptance of 'Uniatism' and territorial overlap in a single location (internal ritualist co-territoriality).</p>
Protestant Churches	Multi-confessionalism and co-territoriality	<p><b>External:</b> establishment of Churches on the territories of other Churches, starting from the day of their differing confessions of faith (external co-territoriality)</p> <p><b>Internal:</b> Churches formed by an informal multiplication of communities and their mutual territorial overlap in a single location (internal co-territoriality)</p>
Orthodox Churches	Ethnic multi-jurisdictionalism and internal co-territoriality:	<p><b>External:</b> Yet to be established at a canonical level</p> <p><b>Internal:</b> Churches and ecclesiastical jurisdictions of ethnic and cultural character formed with mutual territorial overlap in a single location (ethnic internal co-territoriality)</p>

This is the ecclesiological puzzle that illustrates the meaning, the characteristics and the perspectives of our 'post-ecclesiological' age.

One further point should be taken into account regarding these three ecclesiologies:

(1) At no time since the thirteenth century has the Catholic Church condemned ritualism as a distortion of the ecclesiology of the Church. On the contrary, ecclesiological ritualism continues to inspire the various different ritualist Catholic Churches and to determine their origins.

(2) Neither have the Protestants condemned their *confessional* ecclesiology (which originates in the sixteenth century) as deviating from the ecclesiology of St Paul. On the contrary, ecclesiological confessionalism continues to inspire the Protestant Churches and to determine their origins, once they moved away definitively from the Pauline ecclesiology of the New Testament.

Though theologically unjustified, the very absence of any condemnation (whether conciliar or not) should in some measure diminish their responsibility.

(3) Orthodox Christians, however, when ethnic ecclesiology began to flourish and prosper in the nineteenth century, immediately summoned the Pan-Orthodox Council of Constantinople (1872) and condemned ecclesiological ethno-phyletism as a heresy. Of all the Christian Churches, only the Orthodox had the theological courage to take conciliar action and condemn such a distorted form of ecclesiology, thereby revealing the sensitivity of their ecclesiological awareness (at least at that time). After that Council, however, virtually all the 'national' Orthodox Churches have nothing to show for themselves, whether in their Statutes or canonically, except an ethnic ecclesiology, i.e. the heresy they have condemned in Council not long ago.

We see today that everyone acts on an ethnic basis and organises their 'ethno-ecclesial diaspora' (*sic*) up to this day.

This is why Orthodox Christians, in contrast to Catholics and Protestants, have no excuse for behaving in such an anti-ecclesiological manner. It is contrary to their own conciliar decisions and recommendations, and thereby contributes to the fragmentation of the Body of the Church wherever it is called to be established throughout the world.

This clearly points to the fact that the age through which the Church is now living is unmistakably post-ecclesiological, though we know very well that ecclesiology concerns the very mode of existence of the Church. If this is really so, at this time, when everyone (Catholics, Protestants and Orthodox Christians alike) speaks of eucharistic ecclesiology, we can ask: at a time of incorrect ecclesiological understanding, to what extent is the Eucharist possible? For the Fathers of the Church, if faith of a Church was incorrect, then the Eucharist was impossible! Is this also true in the case of ecclesiology?

In the end, the three ecclesiologies we have explored share the same pathology, in spite of differences in their theology, confession of faith, or even Church life. What can be said concerning the pathology of one Church's ecclesiology is in general valid for the ecclesiology of the other Churches as well, with all that derives from this, even taking the specific characteristics of each Church into account. Consequently, what we have here are three 'sister' ecclesiologies (analogous to 'sister' Churches), whose characteristics correspond and overlap. These three ecclesiologies are not in communion, however, because they are distinct. They are also completely unrelated to the ecclesiology of the Church. The New Testament would have to be rewritten if it were to justify theologically our current Christian ecclesiologies. The re-establishment in Christ of the people of God, as described in the New Testament, is against *every* form of exclusivity or particularism.

In our multicultural societies today cultural demands are more comprehensible than the feeble ontological answers provided by the Churches. The Churches will have to choose whether to preserve the Pauline ecclesiology of the New Testament that guided them for fifteen centuries, or to give in to the confessional, ritualist, cultural or nationalist demands of this post-ecclesiological age. These demands have unquestionably determined the established ecclesiology of this present age – and by the look of things - of the future as well. In the latter case, the Church of Christ will be the fifth wheel of the wagon, tragically trailing behind the worldly progress of the nations rather than leading them along the path to the *eschaton* already traced out by the Resurrection (Rev 22:20). The fault will lie with the Churches themselves.

**Postscript**

The negative vote of France and Holland on 29 and 31 May 2005 respectively, during their referenda on the European Constitution, have demonstrated that countries that have freed themselves from nationalism and a rigid State-ism, that have played a leading role in the construction of Europe and have genuinely fought against Europe's nationalistic past, have in the end been unable to escape from it.

So how can countries still under influence of nationalism ever hope to succeed? Not only have these countries not freed themselves from their nationalist past, but to this day, they, too, by one ecclesiastical or institutional means or another, claim that it is the idea of the Nation-State, in other words, the nationalism of the State, which determines the ecclesiology of the Church and the canonical resolution of every ecclesiological issue. In this situation the voice of the canons of the Church and her ecclesiology reverberates very feebly in the face of the powerful sonorities of contemporary Orthodox ethnically-based ecclesial Statutes. Indeed, this voice can hardly be heard above the tumult caused in this post-ecclesiological age by these distorted echoes of the Church's true ecclesiology.