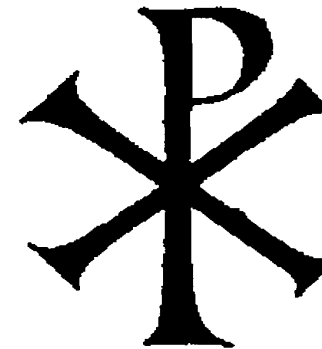


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(2) Constantinople should return, at least formally, the jurisdictional rights over the Greek diaspora groups to the autocephalous Church of Greece.

(3) In this way, the position of honour of the Ecumenical See, *primus inter pares*, would be grounded in the witness of the right and pure faith, and not be expressed by capturing areas or by the submission of other parts of the Church.

(4) When the Ecumenical See, by its own acts, removes all doubts which have been related to it and gives an example of humility first, there would grow up equal diaspora groups in Western Europe and elsewhere. This would renew an atmosphere of peace and love between them. And this would also create the possibility for episcopal co-operation and in that way the gradual birth of new local churches. This would be real preparation for the Great and Holy Synod, steps of advance that would help to normalise the situation and to make it again follow the canonical order. Then it would also be possible to negotiate without pain on open questions, in such a way that no one would aim for individual benefit, but would only desire what is to the advantage of the Church of Christ and to the credibility of its message.

If we acted in this direction, it would also bring new hope to the diaspora, whose many local problems could then be solved in the unity of love. Then faith and trust in the energy of life and in the apostolic mission of the Orthodox Church within the whole of Christendom would come again to the hearts of thousands of people.

The Sunday of Orthodoxy is represented iconographically by a scene from the last Ecumenical Council, the Seventh. In the chairman's seat we do not see Rome — not the first, nor the second, nor the third — but rather the Gospel of Christ. It reminds us in our own time of the fact that it is Christ and His holy Word which guides the Church.

The Great and Holy Synod, the Ecumenical Council of the Orthodox Church, would be able to convene only after we 'have been renewed in the spirit of our minds' (Eph. 4:23) or, by confessing our sins, have become meek enough to say, 'for it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us' (Acts 15:28).

Valamo Monastery, 1979.

Father Zhivko Panev

SOME REMARKS ON THE NOTION OF AUTOCEPHALY

*This timely study of autocephaly by a young Serbian theologian serves to remind us of days in which 'autocephaly' (the right of a group of dioceses to choose their senior hierarch without reference to external authority) was a much more widespread phenomenon than it is today. Within the Roman Empire, until the fourth century, each local province — and there were many of them — was an autocephalous metropolitanate. By the 6th century, with establishment of the pentarchy, autocephalous entities had been severely reduced in number. Nevertheless, autocephaly, with the attendant requirement of recognition by 'sister' autocephalous churches, remains a fundamental aspect of Orthodox ecclesiology. There is no limit, in theory, to the possible number of autocephalous units, though each must include a minimum of four dioceses. The boundaries of autocephalous ecclesial entities have normally — but not always — followed those of the secular world, but the growth of the modern nation state and attendant ethnic rivalries has seriously disturbed Church consciousness in the modern period, as, for example, in Estonia. The article first appeared in French in **Contacts** No. 70 (1995), pp. 125-134.*

Introduction

The history of the Orthodox church in the 19th and 20th centuries is marked by a proliferation of autocephalous Churches, and there is an abundant literature about the origins of autocephalous Churches in this period of the Church's history. Discussions concerning autocephaly at the time were coloured by nationalistic quarrels and considerations which embittered relations between the Orthodox Churches, scandalising the faithful and discrediting the Orthodox Church in the eyes of the non-Orthodox.

In ecclesiastical historiography this problem has been approached in a variety of ways. Thus, for some, the Orthodox Church is divided into a number of independent Churches whose existence serves to demonstrate that the Orthodox Church possesses the true unity proper to the Church.¹

For others, autocephaly is almost a political term. For them, the concept of autocephaly is regarded as representing the various Orthodox Churches

¹ Cf. S. Troitsky, 'Autocephalie ecclésiastique', *Messenger de l'Exarchat du Patriarche russe en Europe occidentale* 11 (1952).

who have managed to free themselves, who have their own administrative and spiritual head, and whose borders coincide with those of their respective States.²

One can see here an echo of the theory put forward in 1820 by the Greek canonist, Theoklystos Pharmakides, according to which the Church is not free except in its internal affairs as regards dogma and cult, while the administration of a 'national' Church and its relations with other Churches are the exclusive competence of the civil authorities.³

This principal, 'an autocephalous Church in an independent State', was approved and developed later on by Patriarch Joachim III of Constantinople in a letter concerning the recognition of the Church of Serbia in 1879. This letter was a response to the letters of the Serbian prince Milan Obrenovic and of Metropolitan Michael of Belgrade, who were requesting autocephaly for the Serbian Church. After having carefully studied the question, Patriarch Joachim III and his synod recognised that the autocephaly of a local Church may be established 'not only in conformity with the historical importance of the various cities and regions of Christendom, but also in conformity with the political situation of peoples and of nations'. Alluding to the 28th Canon of the Council of Chalcedon and to the opinion of Saint Photius, Patriarch Joachim reaffirmed that 'ecclesiastical rights, especially those of parishes, usually follow the political subdivisions of the country and government concerned'.⁴ Thus one gets the impression that autocephaly consists in granting to national (in the modern understanding of the word) Churches a privilege which was once reserved for the five patriarchates of the Byzantine 'pentarchy'.

And yet very little is known about the meaning of the term 'autocephaly' during the period of the Early and Mediaeval Church.⁵ This is all the more surprising since these periods represent the high point in the development of Orthodox canon law. It was at this time that all the universal norms of Orthodox canon law originated and it was then that those collections were compiled which even today comprise the sources of that law.⁶

In his excellent article entitled 'The predicament of the Church historian', Father Georges Florovsky cites Marc Bloch as saying that 'Christianity is the religion of historians'.⁷ One might equally well say that the Christian religion is a constant invitation to the study of history. For history is, in effect, a study of the past. It is also the interpretation of sources. And what is a historical source? A historical source *only* exists in the context of a historical enquiry.

² J. Karmiris, Art. 'Ecclesia', in *Greek Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*.

³ Cf. Spyridon Galanis, 'Comment fut déclarée l'autocéphalie de l'Eglise grecque', *Contacts* 133 (1986), pp. 37-47, and 134 (1986), pp. 128-148.

⁴ Cf. H. Dushich, *History of the Serbian Church* (Belgrade 1894), pp. 232-236.

⁵ I.e. from the times of the Apostles until the Fall of Constantinople in 1453.

⁶ Cf. A. Kniazeff, *Cours de droit canonique — les Sources* (Paris 1980), p. 78.

⁷ In his *Apologie pour l'Histoire, ou Métier d'Historien*.

Things by themselves are dumb, they do not speak. The same can be said of texts: they only speak when they are understood; they only reply when they are questioned.

But all research presupposes that the enquiry has a direction from the beginning. At the start there must be a 'guiding spirit'. It is only in the context of a guided and directed enquiry that 'things' become sources. In fact, historical sources cannot simply be treated as if they were the traces or 'footprints' of the past. They are more like witnesses in a trial than like footprints. In the words of Benedetto Croce: 'History is not a chronicle. A chronicle is only the corpse of history. A chronicle is a "thing", a complex of sounds and signs. But history is an activity of the mind. "Things" become sources only in the process of cognition. Historical sources do not exist outside of this process.'⁸ The question which the historian asks is the question of meaning and therefore of comprehension. History only begins when the evidence becomes intelligible. And the first step in true exegesis is to grasp the spirit of the writer, or of the protagonists in a historical event.

Because of this, when I raised the question of autocephaly, I felt compelled not only to return to the sources of this institution (the canons, the imperial legislation), but also to understand these sources in the light of Orthodox ecclesiology as this has been developed from the beginning, for it is the enduring foundation of every form of ecclesiastical organisation.

It will be necessary to try to reconstruct the history of the creation of the autocephaly of each Church involved within the framework of the ecclesiastical organisation of the Byzantine Empire. These cases are more numerous than is generally believed, and their variety itself enables one to deduce a precious lesson for our time.

As regards the first period, that of the Early Church, it is clear that it reflects, more or less, a canonical practice which is founded on sound ecclesiological principles.

The mediaeval period, for its part, witnesses the birth of forms of ecclesiastical organisation which will serve as the basis for the autocephalies of the nineteenth century.

To understand the notion of autocephaly, any analysis must take as its point of departure the 'local' Church. Each Church that is united to its bishop and in which is celebrated the mystery of the Holy Eucharist, is within the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic church, not just as one part of the whole, since to the extent that it is in communion with that whole in the Holy Spirit, it is itself the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church and the fullness of the Body of Christ.

⁸ B. Croce, *Teoria e storia della Storiografia* (Bari 1948), p 11.

The relationship between the Church which is spread abroad throughout the world and the circumscribed 'local' Church can be likened to the relationship between identical circles. It is not the relationship between a collective entity and its incomplete parts. Instead of relying on a permanent centre of unity, it is the principle of the mutual recognition of local Churches which forms the basis of its existence. It is a 'union held in common', to paraphrase the Church historian Eusebius. This mutual recognition was (and still is) always necessary. It was manifested by the concession of the role of chief celebrant at the Eucharistic Liturgy to bishops visiting from other Churches, by the exchange of letters of recommendation to faithful moving from one place to another, by the calling of councils, and by the obligatory presence of neighbouring bishops at all episcopal consecrations.

Thus every form of ecclesiastical organisation can be expected to express this union, including autocephaly. Any Church which is separated from the others ceases to be a 'catholic' Church. The 'communion' of Churches represents an ecclesiological requirement for each and every Church.

In the light of this principle, autocephaly appears as just one more form of this 'communion' and serves to manifest the catholicity of the Church in the light of trinitarian theology. For there is a strict correspondence between Orthodox trinitarian theology and Orthodox ecclesiology.⁹

It is nevertheless true that in all periods ecclesiastical institutions have tended to develop without reference to ecclesiological principles, and to follow their own internal logic.

As is the case with every other aspect of supra-episcopal organisation in the period under consideration, autocephaly was established either by an ecumenical council (Cyprus), or on the initiative of a 'Mother' Church (by Antioch in the case of Georgia), or by imperial decree, as in the case of Justiniana Prima, the Archdiocese of Ravenna, the Church of Bulgaria (927) and the Archdiocese of Ochrid during the reign of Basil II (1019), or by means of bilateral treaties between two civil governments (Church of Serbia).

Over the centuries the intervention of non-ecclesiastical factors gradually changed the understanding of autocephaly and as a result the forms of supra-episcopal Church organisation have varied considerably. During the period of the Early Church each civil province constituted an autocephalous Church. The Byzantine canonist Balsamon, in his commentary on Canon 2 of Constantinople, tells us that formally all the heads of provinces (metropolitan districts) were autocephalous and elected by their respective synods. This system was promulgated by the First Ecumenical Council. After having

⁹ J. Zizioulas, 'Christologie, pneumatologie et institutions ecclésiastiques', in *Les Eglises après Vatican II - Actes du Colloque international de Bologne - 1980*. Collection 'Théologie historique', No. 61 (Beauchesne: Paris).

¹⁰ Cf. F. Dvornik, *Byzance et la primauté romaine* (Paris 1964).

defined in Canons 4 and 5 the framework of the metropolitan district, the Fathers of the Council of Nicaea recognised, regularised and delimited the juridical authorities superior to provinces which had already begun to develop in the pre-Constantinian period.

By comparing the structure of the church with the division of the Eastern Empire into civil provinces, one can see that the Church, at the beginning of the fourth century, officially adopted the administrative divisions of the Empire as the basis of its own organisation.

This 'principle of accommodation' was dictated by purely practical considerations, as is shown by Canon 9 of the Council of Antioch:

The bishops of each province should know that the bishop who presides in the metropolis is charged with care of the whole province, since it is to the metropolis that people come from all parts to do business. As a result, it is determined that he shall also occupy the first place in honour and that the other bishops, conforming to the ancient rule established by our Fathers, will not be able to do anything without him save administer their own city with its surrounding countryside; each bishop, in effect, is master of his own diocese and should administer it with piety and have oversight over the country areas which are dependencies of the episcopal city; he should ordain priests and deacons, and do all things with discernment. But other than this he can do nothing without the agreement of the bishop of the metropolis, as the latter should do nothing without the advice of the other bishops.¹¹

This principle is strictly territorial, i.e. there is a strict congruity between the Roman civil provinces and the corresponding ecclesiastical boundaries. The Church does not organise itself in an arbitrary manner. This principle exists in the first instance to give expression to 'the communion and good order (*eutaxia*) of the Church'.¹² The Fathers of the Council of Constantinople (381) later divided the East into five parts corresponding to the five civil 'dioceses' of the Prefecture of the East: Egypt (Alexandria), Oriens (Antioch), Asia (Ephesus), Pontus (Caesarea in Cappadocia), Thrace (Heraclea, then afterwards Constantinople).¹³ The incumbents of these five major sees were to have a right of administration or oversight (*oikonomein*) in the regions around them. It was thus the civil diocese, and no longer the province, which became the autocephalous unit.¹⁴

¹¹ Cf. Fonti, *Discipline générale antique*, vol. 1,2, p.110.

¹² Cf. Balsamon in Rhallis and Potlis, *Synagma*, vol. iv (Athens 1858), p. 548.

¹³ Canon 2 of Constantinople I (381) in Fonti, *op. cit.*, t. 1.

¹⁴ Rhallis and Potlis, *op. cit.*, vol. ii, p. 171.

Finally, two centuries later, the system of Church governance envisaged by the Fathers of Nicaea was transformed into the five huge ecclesiastical entities which comprised the pentarchy.

It was Justinian I (527-565) who formally introduced the system of the pentarchy (without using the name), both in his legislation and in his ecclesiastical policy.¹⁵ The occupants of these five sees would be called patriarchs — the term itself was definitively fixed during his reign.¹⁶

Canon 36 of the 6th Ecumenical Council shows that this system was accepted and confirmed by the Ecumenical Councils, which at the same time introduced a hierarchical relationship between these major sees:

We decree that the see of Constantinople will enjoy the same privileges as the see of Old Rome and will have in Church affairs the same grandeur as it, coming second after it; the see of the great city of Alexandria will come after them, then that of Antioch, and after this, the see of the city of Jerusalem.¹⁷

The pentarchy had scarcely been given a place in the theory of canon law, when it began to lose its practical significance. The German invasions in the West and the Arab invasion in the East, together with the emergence of monophysitism in the East, brought with them great changes in the geography of the Church. In effect, after the fifth century, the Church of Alexandria, troubled by Christological disputes, no longer had the possibility of exercising its influence on affairs elsewhere. The Patriarchate of Antioch was similarly weakened by the same disputes.

Nevertheless, the theory of the pentarchy not only did not disappear, but was even strengthened during the period of great theological controversies. Thus Saint Theodore the Studite, in order to combat the interference of the emperor in dogmatic matters, claimed that authority in this area belonged only to the whole Church, represented by the five patriarchs.¹⁸

During the golden age of Byzantium the pentarchy represented the ideal of order in the Church: the ideal of harmony, of mutual support, of co-ordination, and above all of consensus.¹⁹

¹⁵ *Novellae* 109; 123, c. 22; 126, c. 3; 131, c. 2.

¹⁶ Cf. E. Méliá, 'Pentarchie et primauté', in *La primauté romaine dans la communion des églises* (Cerf: Paris 1991), pp. 74-103.

¹⁷ Cf. *Les canons des conciles oecuméniques*, in Fonti, *op. cit.*

¹⁸ Theodore the Studite, *Ep.* 124, PG 99, col. 1417.

¹⁹ See the letter of Peter of Antioch (1054) addressed to Peter of Grado: 'The human body is governed by a single head, but it has many members which are governed by the five senses. So too the Body of Christ — which is the Church of the faithful — composed of various nations or members and guided in the same manner by the five senses, i.e., the five sees, is governed by a single head, Christ himself.' Text in C. Will, ed., *Acta et scripta quae de controversiis ecclesiae graecae et latinae saeculo undecimo composita extant* (Leipzig 1861), 211-212.

Yet in spite of the theory of five patriarchates, there were other Churches which had the right to appoint their own bishops and were called autocephalous Churches. These were:

(1) the Church of Cyprus, whose autocephaly was confirmed by the 3rd (381) and 6th Ecumenical Councils;

(2) the Church of Georgia, which obtained its autocephaly from Antioch (486);

(3) the Archdiocese of Justiniana Prima, which became autocephalous in 535 by the decision of Emperor Justinian I;

(4) the Archdiocese of Ravenna, which became autocephalous in 666 by a decision of Emperor Constance II;

(5) the Church of Bulgaria received the status of a patriarchate from the Patriarch of Constantinople in 927;

(6) the Archdiocese of Ochrid became autocephalous in 1019 by a decree of Emperor Basil II;

(7) the Church of Serbia, at the request of Saint Sava and the insistence of the Emperor Theodore Lascaris, received autocephaly in 1219 at Nicaea from the Ecumenical Patriarch Manuel I.

During the imperial period there was a constant tendency towards centralisation, at first around the five patriarchates and then around a single centre, Constantinople.

Our present day misunderstandings come from an overestimation of the importance of autocephaly. It is virtually identified with the nature of the local Church [whereas the true 'local church' is the diocese, *ed.*]. But it has always been simply a form of ecclesiastical organisation, i.e. the right of the bishops of a certain area, circumscribed by empirical givens (the principle of accommodation to civil boundaries, ancient customs) to choose their own colleagues, including the senior among them, without external interference. The only canonical constraint is the number of consecrating bishops required, for there must be at least three.²⁰ Thus an autocephalous entity should be made up of at least four dioceses so as to be able to consecrate a bishop without external help if one of the sees should become vacant.

Autocephaly has become, today, synonymous with the 'national' Church. This concept gives rise to phyletism, and phyletism, or religious nationalism

²⁰ P. L'Huilier, 'La pluralité des consécrateurs dans les chirotonies épiscopales', *Messenger de l'Exarchat du Patriarcat russe en Europe occidentale*, 42-43 (Paris 1963).

is probably the most dreadful single illness of the contemporary Orthodox world. To be sure a certain phyletism also exists among other Christians, as for example among Roman Catholics (the Poles, the Croats), the Anglicans, and among non-Christians (certain Muslims, the Jews).

And so an 'autocephalous' Church has come to be understood as the *sine qua non* of the sovereignty of States and of nations. It is noteworthy that all the Orthodox Churches of the Balkans (except the Church of Serbia) have gone through a period of schism in the 19th and 20th century: the Church of Greece for 17 years (1833-1850), the Romanian Church for 21 years (1864-1885), the Bulgarian Church for 72 years (1872-1948), the Church of Albania for 15 years (1922-1937).

By way of conclusion I would like to quote what was written by the great Serbian theologian, Father Justin Popovic, on this subject in an article which appeared in 1923:

The Church is divine-human eternity, made flesh within the limits of time and space. It is found in this world, but it is not of this world (Jn 18:36). It is found in this world in order to raise this world on high, from whence, moreover, the Church itself comes.

The Church is ecumenical, catholic, divine-human and eternal, and it is therefore an inexcusable blasphemy against Christ and against the Holy Spirit to make of the Church a national institution and to confine it to the narrow outlook and methods of a petty nationalism that must one day pass away ... The fullness of time is come and it is now the twelfth hour, when our ecclesiastical representatives must cease to be exclusively the servants of nationalism and become priests and highpriests (bishops) of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. The ultimate purpose of the Church is supra-national and world-wide, embracing all mankind. Having been brought together in Christ, all men — without regard to nation, race or social class, for there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, neither male nor female — all are one in Christ Jesus (Gal.3:28), because Christ himself is all in all (Col 3:11).²¹

²¹ J. Popovic, *L'homme et le Dieu-homme* (L'Age d'Homme: Lausanne 1989), pp. 70f.

Nancy Forest

REFLECTIONS ON MARRIAGE

Few aspects of the Orthodox Tradition seem more difficult to defend today than its attitude towards marriage as a human, personal reality whose psychological and even physical side can only be fully understood 'from above', within a spiritual framework based on the relationship of Christ to the Church. In this article Nancy Forest confronts the incomprehension of her friends — and the culture in which she lives — and seeks to root her understanding of marriage in scripture and experience.

After thirteen years of legally acknowledged marriage, my husband Jim and I received the sacrament of marriage on 10 September 1995, at the Church of St Nicholas of Myra in Amsterdam. After the ceremony I spoke with several women, all of them non-Orthodox, who had had quite some difficulty with one part of the wedding service. The part that caused the problems was the reading from St Paul's letter to the Ephesians (5:21-33):

Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Saviour. As the church is subject to Christ, so let wives also be subject in everything to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. Even so husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no man ever hates his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.' This mystery is a profound one, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church; however, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

I was concerned that the people who had difficulty with this passage would let it overshadow all the things that they found good and beautiful about the