

The Schism of the Roman Church. The Enlightenment of the Slavs.

Not long after the period of the Ecumenical Councils, the Western part of the Church fell away from the Ecumenical Orthodox Church and formed what eventually has become known as the Roman Catholic Church.

This is how it happened. After the Apostles installed their successors to guide the Church, the bishops, who had an equal degree of priesthood, had different powers. Bishops of the smaller cities were subordinated to the bishops of the larger cities, who were called *metropolitans*. The metropolitans in turn were subordinated to the bishops in the capital cities, who were called *patriarchs*. The highest power in the Church belonged to councils to which even the patriarchs were subordinated.

In ancient times, there were five patriarchs: the patriarchs of Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem. The Patriarch of Rome came to be known as a pope. For a long time other bishops were also thus named. The word "pope" means father.

All five patriarchs had equal rights and did not claim authority outside their own patriarchate. None of them was higher or lower than another; and only in honour; the Roman patriarch did come first because of the prominent position of Rome as the capital of the empire. Over the course of time, however, the Roman pope expanding his realm began to strengthen in power and sought to subordinate all the other patriarchs to himself, so that the pope might become the sole head of the Christian Church. Such a claim by the Roman pope was recognized to be uncanonical. This along with the change in the Creed was a chief cause of the separation of the Western church from Orthodoxy.

Subsequently, the Protestant confessions separated from the Roman Catholic church. At about the time of the fall of the Roman Church, the Ecumenical Orthodox Church was enlarged by the entrance of the Slavic people, who were converted to Christianity.

The first missionaries to the Slavs were Sts. *Cyril* and *Methodius*, the brothers, who selflessly laboured to spread the Christian faith among the Slavs. They composed the Slavonic alphabet and translated the Holy Scriptures and service books into the Slavic language.

After their death, Christianity became firmly established among the Bulgarians and Serbians; and later, all the Russian people were baptized into the Christian faith.

The Baptism of Russia.

The land of Russia became a Christian country almost a thousand years after the appearance of our Saviour in the world. Before that time, people in the Russian land worshipped idols and were pagans. The main idols were the sun god and the god of thunder and lightning, Perun. Besides these, there were many lesser gods to protect the household, the courtyard, water, woods, and etc. In the lives of these pagans, there were many superstitious, false beliefs, savage customs, and even human sacrifice to idols.

According to tradition, *the holy Apostle Andrew the First-called* preached the Gospel in *Scythia*, in the land which later became Russia. Having climbed the Kievan Mountains, he placed a wooden cross there and prophesied that in this land the true faith of Christ would shine.

The holy Apostle Andrew missioned the future land of Russia from the south to the north, from the Kievan Mountains to Novgorod, and was even on the island of Valaam. The latest historical

evidence testifies to this. Local northern Russian tradition shows that the Apostle Andrew the First-called, enlightener of the Scythians and the Slavs, came from Kiev to Novgorod. From there, he travelled along the Volga River to Lake Ladoga and then — to Valaam where he blessed the mountain with a *stone cross*. He destroyed the temples of Veles and Perun and converted to the Christian faith the priests of the idols and the pagan inhabitants of the island laying at Valaam the foundation for confession of faith in Christ. Several of his disciples who had accompanied him remained as pastors for the newly gathered flock of Christ.

In the ancient manuscript "Opoved" kept in the library of the Valaam monastery, mention of this is made: "St. Andrew of Jerusalem came to Goliad, Kosoch, Roden, Scythe, Scythia, and Slavonia via contiguous meadows (steppes), reached Smolensk and the home guard at Scothe of the Great Slaviansky. Leaving Ladoga, he went by boat over the stormy, turbulent lake to Valaam placing stone crosses and blessing everywhere with the sign of the Cross. His disciples, Silus, Phirsus, Elisha, Lukoslav, Joseph, and Cosmas, set missions everywhere and all the rulers came from Slovensk and Smolensk. Many pagan priests were baptized, and the temples of Perun and Veles were destroyed and obliterated."

Another ancient document, "*Vseletnik*" (All the Years) of the Kievan Metropolitan Hilarion, 1051 A.D., affirms the travels of St. Andrew the Apostle on Valaam.

In the "*Vseletnik*," it is written, "November 30th. St. Andrew the All-praised, First-called Apostle and Standard-bearer of the Church we extol; and for of old, he came to Kiev, Smolensk, Novgorod, Dpyzino and Valaam."

Evidence supports that which the oral and written tradition of Valaam affirms, that the Orthodox Christian faith was established on Valaam by St. Andrew the Apostle. Whether Christianity continued on Valaam without interruption until the time of the founding of a monastery is impossible to determine positively.

Evidence from the ancient manuscript "*Opoved*" suggested that on Valaam after the Apostle Andrew, there existed a continual governmental organization with its *vetche* (popular assembly in ancient Russia) as it was in Novgorod. Valaam was known in foreign lands; and in times of danger, people sought safety there. A stone cross of St. Andrew the Apostle was kept there until the time of St. Sergius of Valaam, which indicated the existence of Christianity. Before the founding of a monastery on it, Valaam belonged to the Slavs and probably existed in civic unity with Novgorod. On Valaam, traces of the Orthodox Christian faith remained until the time of St. Sergius although paganism continued along side Christianity.

The first of the Russian princes to be baptized, according to tradition, were the Kievan princes Ashold and Dir in 867 A.D. Almost a hundred years after them, the wise Russian princess *Olga* noticing the chaste lives of Kievan Christians was influenced by the truth of their faith and accepted holy baptism in 957 A.D. She travelled to Constantinople with a large retinue, was baptized by the Patriarch himself, and took the name Helena. Returning home, she tried to persuade her son Svyatoslav to convert to Christianity, but he being by nature a rigorous military man did not consent.

God provided Christian enlightenment to the Russian land through Prince *Vladimir*, grandson of Olga. At first, Vladimir was a zealous pagan and led an unchaste life. In his presence, two Christians, Theodore and John (father and son), were sacrificed to idols becoming the first martyrs of Russia. Vladimir soon sensed the total emptiness of paganism and began to think about another, better faith.

When it became known that a Russian prince was seeking another faith, representatives of various religions began to come to him: Mohammedans, Jews, German Catholics, and Greek

Orthodox. The Greek Orthodox representative made the deepest impression on Vladimir. In concluding his conversation, he showed Vladimir a picture of the Last Judgement.

Vladimir said, "It would be good to be with the righteous that are on the right side."

"Be baptized, and you will be with them," answered the representative.

Prince Vladimir consulted with his boyars, members of the Russian aristocratic order, who advised him to send ten wise envoys to the various countries to discover which faith was the best.

The envoys visited the countries from which the representatives had come. Returning to Kiev, they told the prince everything they had seen, and they praised the Greek Orthodox faith. They said that there was neither faith better than the Greeks' nor such people as they. "When we stood during the service in the Greek Church, we were not sure whether we were on earth or in heaven," they said. And then it came to be that having tasted sweetness, they no longer wanted the bitter. Having found the Greek Orthodox faith, they no longer wanted to worship their idols.

The boyars remarked to Vladimir about this, "If the Greek Orthodox faith was not better than the others, then your grandmother, Princess Olga, would not have converted to it, for she was the wisest of people."

Then, Prince Vladimir finally decided to accept the Orthodox faith. But as a pagan, he considered it would be humiliating to ask the Greeks about it. So, about a year later, he sent a military expedition against Greece and took the city of Korsun. The city of Korsun or Cherson was located in the Crimea, at that time — part of the Greek empire. He then demanded of the Greek Emperors Basil and Constantine, co-rulers at the time, that they hand over to him their sister Anna. The Emperors answered that they could not give their sister to a pagan. Then, Vladimir explained to them his desire to convert to the Christian faith and asked them to send Princess Anna and also a priest to baptize him. The Emperors immediately sent a priest to Korsun accompanied by the Princess Anna. It happened at that time that Vladimir's eyes began to fail so badly that he became blind. Princess Anna advised Vladimir to be baptized immediately. Vladimir took the advice of the princess and was baptized taking the name Basil. No sooner, had he been baptized and emerged from the font than the scales fell from his eyes, and he was able to see. Vladimir recovered physically and spiritually and in joy exclaimed, "Now I have found the true God!"

Prince Vladimir married Princess Anna and returned to Kiev. A contingent from Greece came with him consisting of a metropolitan, six bishops, many priests, and everything they needed for the services of the Church. This was in the year 988 A.D.

First, Vladimir suggested to his twelve sons that they be baptized, and they were. After them, many boyars were baptized. Finally, Vladimir ordered all the inhabitants of Kiev to come on a designated day to the Dnieper River; and there in the presence of the prince, the spiritual mystery of Holy Baptism was performed. Prince Vladimir joyously directed his gaze to Heaven, prayed to God that the Lord Who had made Heaven and earth would bless the Russian people, grant them to know Him, the true God, and would strengthen the true faith in the Russian people. On this great day, Heaven and earth rejoiced.

Having converted to Christianity, Vladimir changed in every way. From a coarse and savage pagan, he became a pious and merciful Christian. He ordered all the poor people to come to his royal court and receive there everything they needed: food, clothing, and even money. Furthermore, carts were loaded with bread, meat, fish, vegetables, honey, and kvass and sent around to the cities and villages for all the sick and needy who were unable to come.

The people loved their *Grand Prince* and nicknamed him "Beautiful Sun;" and as to the sun, the people turned to him and with him walked toward God.

The Holy Church numbers Grand Prince Vladimir and Princess Olga among its saints. Prince Vladimir received the title of *Equal-of-the-Apostles* for his apostolic zeal.

With the help of God, Orthodox Christianity soon spread from Kiev and flourished throughout the Russian land. The Russian people embraced the Orthodox faith with all their soul and were spiritually enlightened by it. All the arts, schools, monasteries, literature, the whole of Russian culture, spiritual as well as secular, was inspired by Orthodoxy. The light of Christ shone over the country, and it became known forever as Holy Russia, and the people, "The Russian Orthodox people."

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**Holy Trinity Monastery 1993 /
Holy Trinity Orthodox Mission 2003
466 Foothill Blvd, Box 397, La Canada, Ca 91011
Editor: Bishop Alexander (Mileant)**