

A Short History of the Orthodox Church in Western Europe in the 20th Century, Ed. Christine Chaillot, *Inter-Orthodox Dialogue*, Paris 2006. 181.

Throughout its two thousand years of existence, Christianity has been plagued by the sins of division and schism. Orthodoxy carries those wounds on its shoulders. The twentieth century in the modern history of humanity was a century with numerous events of wars and suffering. It was truly an apocalyptic time. At the same time, this was a period of migration and the fusion of various peoples, their cultures and traditions as well as religions and ethnic heritages. This process is particularly noticeable and dynamic in Western Europe from the second half of the 1960s.

The presence of the Orthodox Church in this region dates from the second half of the seventeenth century until the beginning of the twentieth century. Small communities formed for the spiritual well-being of the Orthodox people who lived for longer or shorter periods of time in the large political and economic centers of Western Europe (London, Vienna, Paris, Trieste, Leipzig...). The arrival of a huge number of refugees from Russia after the Bolshevik revolution brought numerous members of the Orthodox clergy to Western Europe, especially to France and its capital Paris. At the same time some Greek refugees also arrived there from Asia Minor as a result of the unsuccessful Anatolian expedition. As a result of this there was an exchange of population between Greece and Turkey in 1923. Due to these tragic events, members of the Orthodox Church were brought to Western Europe and the church structures (dioceses, parishes, monasteries, church schools) was formed there between the two world wars.

As from the second half of the 1960s, there began a new wave of economic migration from different countries to the more developed countries of Western Europe. Amongst these immigrants were people from Orthodox countries. The last three decades of the twentieth century were a period of expansion and strengthening of the European Union. At the same time the existence, expansion and formation of new structures of the Orthodox Church occurred in these places. The legal system of the European Union, founded on the highest standards of public liberties and democracy made opportunities also for the Orthodox Church and its followers which allowed them to satisfy their religious needs without any problems. Unfortunately, the process of the formation of new Orthodox communities in Western Europe was followed by very complicated jurisdictional structures, as mentioned at the beginning. This was common for all countries where Orthodoxy excised.

Christine Chaillot, the editor of *A Short History of the Orthodox Church in Western Europe in the 20th Century* has intimate experience of this problem because she has already edited six books dedicated to the eastern Orthodox Churches (Syrian, Coptic, and Ethiopian, Malankara.) Courageously she decided to organize a team of authors from all the Western European countries with the aim of making a handbook about the contemporary life and work of the Orthodox Church in Western Europe. The authors of the articles, fourteen in number, are top experts in that area; the majority of them are also direct participants and eye witnesses because they are all members of the clergy and laity of the churches. They have active participation in the process they describe. The structures of all the articles are the same: a short description of the historical background of the presence of Orthodoxy in each of the Western European countries, their expansion through the

centuries up until the twentieth century, their life and work during the twentieth century and finally the explanation of the contemporary situation which began in the twenty first century. Throughout these fourteen articles, the whole of Western Europe, country by country is included. Indeed, the complete structure of the Orthodox Church is carefully examined. In some countries it is very complicated for example in France Germany and the United Kingdom. The description of the contemporary situation highlights some good results despite the multiplicity of independent jurisdictions in the Orthodox Church. Evidence of this are newly created dioceses, parishes, monasteries, cultural and charitable organizations and the all publishing done by the church. As is customary with a team effort each article carries its authors mark. Some articles are brief and informative whilst others such as K. Ware (*The Orthodox Church in the British Isles*) and T. Laitila (*History of the Finnish Orthodox Church in the 20th Century*), are both enlightening and analytical. Each of these articles includes a bibliography and addresses of web sites for each church institution. It is very helpful for all of those who may be interested in this topic.

A Short History of the Orthodox Church in Western Europe in the 20th Century is a very valuable and useful handbook. Its reliability and informative content make it essential for those who are interested in this topic, both from a professional and scientific point of view, and for those interested in understanding the present conditions and work of the Orthodox Church in Western Europe. Very affirmative forewords by six church leaders from four patriarchates (the Ecumenical, Russian, Serbian and Romanian) witness that the work both of the editor of this book Christine Chaillot and its authors deserve congratulations and gratitude.

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