

# **‘The History of the Church of Russia: The Theory of the Third Rome’**

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Translation of the article in Greek «*Ιστορία τῆς Ἐκκλησίας τῆς Ρωσίας, ἡ θεωρία τῆς Τρίτης Ρώμης*»

Prompted by the Ukrainian issue which has concerned us in recent years, I wanted to read some academic texts, in order to learn something more about the history of the Church of Russia and the renowned theory of the ‘Third Rome’.

In the course of my search, I found a postgraduate dissertation by Anastasius John Lallo in Greek entitled ‘History of the Church of Russia: the Theory of the Third Rome’ (Thessaloniki 2016), which was submitted to the University of Macedonia in Thessaloniki, to the Department of Balkan, Slavic and Oriental Studies, in the wider context of ‘Studies in the languages and culture of the countries of South-Eastern Europe’.

This dissertation is the result of research and investigation of the sources and the existing literature, from which it draws important material and presents information about the history of Russia, as well as about the ‘Third Rome’ theory, which began in the fifteenth century and developed mainly from the sixteenth century onwards, up until our own day.

Professor Constantine Nichoritis supervised this postgraduate study, and it was evaluated by Associate Professor Stavros Kamaroudis and Assistant Professor Cyprian Soutsiou.

I shall briefly present this study, because I do not know if it has been published yet. This will enable readers to form a picture of this issue, precisely because it is very relevant in view of past and present events relating to the autocephaly granted by the Ecumenical Patriarchate to Ukraine, against which the Church of Moscow is reacting.

## **1. The Subject Matter of the Postgraduate Dissertation**

After the introduction, the subject is divided into four chapters.

The first chapter, headed ‘Historical Context – Historical Overview’, refers to the “origin and expansion of the Russians” from the fifth and sixth centuries AD, mainly centred on Kiev.

The second chapter, ‘National and Ecclesiastical History of Russia’, presents the historical events from the baptism of the Russians until the founding of the Patriarchate of Moscow, that is to say, it examines the period from 989 until 1589. The individual sections within this chapter are significant:

‘From the Baptism of the Russians until the Mongol Conquest (989-1240)’; ‘The Kiev Principality’; ‘The Baptism of the Russians (988-989) – Holy Great Prince Vladimir, Equal to the Apostles (1015)’; ‘From Vladimir the Great (1015) until the

Tartar Conquest (1240)'; 'The Rise of Vladimir'; 'The Metropolitans of Kiev and All Russia'; 'Monasticism – The Lavra of the Kiev Caves – Sts Anthony and Theodosius'; 'From the Mongol Conquest of Russia until the Division of the Metropolis of Russia (1240-1462) – Tartar Domination'; 'From the Division of the Metropolis of Russia until the Founding of the Patriarchate (1462-1589)'; 'The Patriarchate of Moscow'.

The title of the third chapter is 'Ecclesiastical History of Russia: The Period of Reorganisation – Administrative Independence and the Theory of the Third Rome.' It is subdivided into the following sections:

'From Rome to New Rome'; 'Before the Fall'; 'The Theory of the Third Rome'; 'The Metropolis of Moscow and the Reorganisation of the Church of Russia'; 'Hierarchy and Hierarchs'; 'The Clergy'; 'Maximus the Greek, Enlightener of the Russians'; 'The Influence of the Holy Mountain on the Spiritual Life of the Slavs.'

The fourth chapter is entitled 'The Beginning, Course and End of the "Third Rome" Theory – Implications for Today.' It is subdivided as follows:

'The Beginning, Course and End of the "Third Rome" Theory – Implications for Today'; 'The Theory of Pan-Slavism and Slav Ethnophyletism'; 'The Geopolitics of Spirituality, the Diplomacy of Faith, and the Hope of the Third Rome'; 'The Prospect of the Theory of the Third Rome and its Political Repercussions'; 'The Subject-Matter of the Theory of the Third Rome and its Repercussions'; 'Conclusions about the Third Rome.'

At the end there is a bibliography of books in Greek and other languages that the researcher used to develop his subject. A chronological table of the basic events in the history of Russia is also appended, together with a list of maps and images relevant to the research subject.

I have cited the headings of the chapters and sub-chapters, tedious as this may seem, in order to show even at a glance that this postgraduate dissertation presents in summary form the national, political and ecclesiastical history of the Russians from the fifth and sixth centuries AD until today, as well as setting out the development and cultivation of the 'Third Rome' theory.

It will therefore be understood that the theory of the 'Third Rome' is the time-bomb smouldering in the depths of the Church of Russia. It undermines the canonical system of the Orthodox Church, which was laid down by the Fathers of the Ecumenical Councils, and, of course, it also undermines the primacy of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. Those who read this dissertation will gain a full picture of the national and ecclesiastical history of Russia, and its implications for the state of the Church today.

## **2. Introduction**

In the 'Introduction' one reads of the great importance of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, which spread Christianity in the realm of the Slavs. All the Southern, Western and Eastern

Slavs converted to Orthodoxy and adopted the cultural tradition of the Byzantine-Roman Empire.

It states:

“The Russian state was deeply influenced by Byzantine ideology, and after the fall of the capital city, the Russians thought and believed profoundly within themselves that they were the sole heirs of the Byzantine spiritual and cultural tradition.”

In this perspective, starting from the fifteenth century, but mainly from the mid-sixteenth century, the theory of the ‘Third Rome’ developed, according to which Moscow, the capital of the Russian state, took the title ‘Third Rome’ after the conquest and fall of Constantinople in 1453, in a symbolic move similar to the foundation by Constantine the Great of Constantinople as the ‘Second Rome’ in relation to the First Rome.

A consequence of the ‘Third Rome’ theory is “the Tsarist theocracy based on the ideology of Pan-Slavism”, which is the construction “of a political and religious totalitarianism of the Slavs based on Orthodoxy.”

With this mentality, the Russians attempted to infiltrate the Holy Mountain and Jerusalem, as this was expressed by the “Tsarist theocracy” and subsequently by “Stalinist atheism”. Both these regimes “are reminiscent of the Pan-Slavic ideology of the past in their attempt to attract the greatest possible benefits.”

Of course, we observe this in our time too, through contemporary political and ecclesiastical practices, which we see every day.

The arrangement of the contents and the introduction are sufficient on their own to show the panoramic view of Russian politics, which greatly influences ecclesiastical life. Through the theory of the ‘Third Rome’ the Ecumenical Patriarchate is undermined as the first-throne Church, and essentially the regime of the Church is put at risk.

### **3. Basic Key Points in this Dissertation**

Everything set out above shows in brief the national, political and ecclesiastical history of Russia. I shall now attempt to present some basic points from this postgraduate dissertation, which was written under the supervision of specialist professors, so that readers can be informed about the issue that concerns us today.

#### *a) The Early Russian People*

The geographical area that is now called Russia was occupied from the fifth and sixth century by the Eastern Slavs, who initially appeared in the third and fourth century AD between the Dnieper and the Dniester, and are referred to as Antes in literature on the subject.

The Slavs had settled at first in the steppes, north of the Pontus Euxinus, where many years earlier other states had flourished, such as the Cimmerians, Scythians and Sarmatians. They later moved westwards, as already mentioned, and fought battles with the Goths, Huns and Avars, who were ravaging those regions.

The Slavs are divided into three large groups: “The Southern Slavs (who include the Slovenes, Serbs and Croats, but also the Bulgars, who became a Slavic tribe), the Western Slavs (who include the Poles, Moravians, Pomeranians, Czechs and Slovak groups) and the Eastern Slavs (Russians).”

The Eastern Slavs united with a warlike people called the Vikings, who are also referred to as Scandinavians or Normans. These Scandinavian tribes, who were characterised as Rus, “subjugated the Eastern Slavic tribes and gave them a strong political structure,” but the Scandinavians, who were fewer in number, “were assimilated both ethnically and linguistically by these Eastern Slavs, who were more numerous.” In this way they all came to be called Russians.

The first centre was organised in the city of Novgorod, and subsequently in Kiev. These two cities were linked to one another, and were two major trading centres at that time “from the Baltic Sea in the north to the Black Sea in the south.”

This study, which summarises the history of the origin and spread of the Russians, concludes that “Kievan Russia was a multi-ethnic mixture of peoples made up of Slavs, Balts, Finns, Scandinavians and various other peoples, and smaller cohesive population groups.” It states:

“It was the Scandinavians who gave the stimulus and impetus, and formed the suitable cultivable substratum constituting the foundation for the process of forming and establishing the first Russian state at that time. In conclusion, taking everything referred to above into account, the state of Kiev can be regarded as the outcome of endogenous and exogenous factors culminating in the dynamic creative tendency of the Scandinavians and Eastern Slavs.”

After the Christianisation of the Russians, which we shall refer to below, Russia was conquered by the Tartars, who were of Mongol origin, in 1240, and this domination lasted until 1462, more than two hundred years. The period of Tartar-Mongol rule was painful for Russia, because it not only stopped its development, but, by cutting it off from Byzantium, it contributed to “its spiritual, cultural and social decline.”

When the Mongols conquered the Russians by force, they did not abolish their political system of administration. Instead, “they governed the Russian principalities through Russian princes, whom they allowed to remain, and who administered their principalities, inherited them and passed them on to their heirs.”

When the Russians were liberated from the Tartars in 1462, they developed politically and ecclesiastically.

#### *b) The Conversion of the Slavs to Christianity*

The Russian people were spreading southwards and were a continuous threat to Constantinople and the Byzantine-Roman Empire in general. This was a matter of concern to the Empire. The attempt to Christianise the Russians, which began with the baptism of the princes of Kiev Askold and Dir, did not have significant results. An important event for the Christianisation of the Russians was the baptism in 955 of St Olga, Equal to the Apostles, the

wife of Prince Igor of Russia. She was regarded as “the forerunner of the coming of Christianity to Russia.” However, “it was Olga’s grandson, Holy Great Prince Vladimir, who was baptised with all the Russians in 988.”

Vladimir was baptised as a Christian in the Church of St Basil in Chersonesos. Subsequently he married Princess Anna Porphyrogenita of Byzantium, the sister of the Emperors Basil II and Constantine VIII. The name Porphyrogenita, ‘born in the purple’ derived from the fact that she was born in the special room of the palace called ‘purple’. Vladimir embraced Christianity after having rejected other possible choices available to him, such as accepting Judaism, Islam or Catholicism.

After his baptism, Vladimir ordered the inhabitants of Kiev to destroy the idols, and invited them to embrace Christianity. With the help of his wife, Anna Porphyrogenita, he constructed many new churches. It is mentioned that in 1124 in Kiev about six hundred churches were in use in various cities. A significant building was the Cathedral of Holy Wisdom, that was built by Vladimir’s son Yaroslav and by Byzantine artists, who took the Church of Holy Wisdom in Constantinople as their model.

In the twelfth century Kiev weakened, and the capital of Russia was moved from Kiev to Vladimir-Suzdal in North Eastern Russia. Great Prince George I, the Long-Armed, “who was the sixth son of Great Prince Vladimir II Monomakh and the Byzantine princess Anastasia,” contributed to this. Anastasia “was the daughter of the Byzantine Emperor Constantine Monomachos.” George the Long-Armed founded other cities as well, including Moscow, which until 1156 was an unimportant settlement, but eventually became “a fortified city with a large population” which played a significant role in the later history of Russia.

In 1260 the Principality of Moscow was founded by Alexander Nevsky, who was an important figure not only in the history of Russia but in world history. Later, on 16 January 1547, Metropolitan Macarius of Moscow crowned Ivan the Terrible as Emperor.

### *c) The Church of Russia from 988 until 1589*

Following the Christianisation of the Russians ecclesiastical life developed intensely in Russia. From 988 until 1240, when Kiev was taken by the Tartars, all the Metropolitans of Kiev and All Russia “were Byzantines, and in fact most of them were of Greek origin.” Monasticism developed strongly, together with the Lavra of the Kiev Caves, and this was mainly due to two Russian monks: Anthony and Theodosius.

As a rule, the Metropolitans of Kiev and All Russia between 988 and 1448 were Greeks. They were chosen by Constantinople, in agreement with the Byzantine Emperor. Many years later there was a “gentle alternation in the succession and election of Greeks and Russians at the head of the Church.” Prospective candidates had to travel to Constantinople and be elected Metropolitans there, before returning to Russia.

In 1459, at the order of Prince Basil Vasilievich, a Synod was held in Moscow, and it was decided that the Metropolis of Russia would be divided into the Metropolis of Moscow and the Metropolis of Kiev. This is the period when the Church of Russia became independent of the Patriarchate of Constantinople. From then on, the Metropolitan of Moscow would be

elected by the Synod of Russian bishops, “and his election would be confirmed only by the head of the Russian state, without the necessary approval of Constantinople.”

Other events that had taken place earlier also contributed to this, as we shall see below. These were connected both with the Council of Ferrara-Florence of 1438-1439 and with the fall of Constantinople to the Ottomans in 1453. From then on, the Tsar is presented as the patron of all the Orthodox. The author notes:

“The development of the power of the state, and particularly of the Tsar, who, after the liberation of Russia from the Mongols and the subjection of the Slavs of the Balkan and Byzantine Empires to the Turks, appears as the only protector of the Orthodox everywhere, and of the Orthodox population in its entirety.”

With the coronation of Ivan IV the Terrible (1533-1584) as Emperor by Metropolitan Macarius of Moscow on 16 January 1457, Greek bishops were excluded from the dioceses and the metropolitan throne of Russia. This event turned the Russian hierarchy into a “purely ethnic affair.” At the same time, however, the emancipation from the Patriarchate of Constantinople granted to each Tsar “the appropriate power and authority to appear as the supreme arbiter of ecclesiastical matters concerning the administration of the Church, and in matters of election and succession.” This means that the bishops and metropolitans “were not only elected at the order of the Tsar and according to his absolute choice, but they were enthroned when he wished, or he obliged them to resign.” It was plainly a Tsarist theocracy.

The Tsar acquired great power in the Church, such that, of the fourteen successors of Metropolitan Jonah of Moscow, “only five died in office, as nine had been deposed or had been obliged to resign. Reference is made to the case of Philip, who was murdered at the initiative of the Tsar, who ordered that the deed be committed.”

In 1589 the Patriarchate of Moscow was founded. The independence of the Metropolitan of Moscow from the Ecumenical Patriarchate had already come about, and Constantinople, together with all the Eastern regions, had fallen to the Turks. For that reason, all the Orthodox Patriarchs of the East were reduced to a terrible state, including economically. The author of the study comments characteristically:

“As regards economic matters, already at the beginning of the sixteenth century the Patriarchs of the East, and by extension all the Churches included in their Patriarchates, were in a very difficult and problematic economic state, and often they were forced to resort to Moscow to receive financial support and economic help in order to meet their obligations.”

In 1586 Patriarch Joachim of Antioch went to Moscow and heard Tsar Theodore’s proposal that a Patriarchate of Moscow be founded, but he answered that this required the agreement of all the Patriarchs of the East. He promised, however, that he would inform the other Patriarchs.

Subsequently, Patriarch Jeremiah II of Constantinople went to Moscow in 1588 for economic assistance, and there he accepted Tsar Theodore’s proposal to found the Patriarchate of Moscow. Patriarch Jeremiah II agreed “because he was hopeful that in the long term it would

be possible for him to become Patriarch of the Patriarchate in question.” Afterwards, however, he gave up his initial ideas and agreed to make Metropolitan Job the Patriarch. This happened on 26 January 1589. At the same time, six Metropolises, six Archdioceses and six episcopal sees were established on Russian territory.

When Patriarch Jeremiah II of Constantinople returned to Constantinople, he convened the 1590 Synod with the Patriarchs of Antioch and Jerusalem, because the throne of the Patriarchate of Alexandria was vacant, in order to examine this issue. Finally, the Synod of 1593, with all the Patriarchs, including the Patriarch of Alexandria, Meletius Pigas, who had been elected meanwhile, ratified the decision of the Patriarch of Constantinople to give Patriarchal honour and dignity to the Patriarch of Moscow, and that he would hold the fifth place in order of rank, after the Patriarch of Jerusalem.

The author of this study expresses a characteristic view, which indicates the state that prevailed at that period:

“The economic difficulty into which many patriarchates of the East had fallen played a part in this proclamation, and in the final establishment of this new arrangement. The economic distress of the Patriarchs of the East was beyond doubt a fact that made them susceptible and led then to seek financial support, as they were unable to meet their obligations. A characteristic example that can be mentioned is the visit to Moscow of Patriarch Joachim, head of the Patriarchate of Antioch, who was subject to an attempt on the part of Moscow to buy influence and intervention. There were other similar situations, as in the case of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, when corresponding financial approaches took place, which entailed financial exchanges to secure favour and mutual agreement.”

During the consultations of Patriarch Jeremiah II with the Russians, as mentioned above, the proposal was made that Jeremiah should relocate to Moscow. This was eventually rejected by the Patriarch. It seems, however, that the Tsar wanted the Patriarch of Moscow to have third place in the hierarchical order of Orthodox Patriarchs, after Constantinople and Alexandria, and before Antioch and Jerusalem. This did not come about, because the other Patriarchs did not agree, and finally the Patriarch of Moscow took fifth place after the Patriarch of Jerusalem.

These moves are connected with the ‘Third Rome’ theory, which was developed by the Russians, and which we shall look at in the next section.

What should be stressed here, however, is that from time to time there was conflict between the Patriarch of Moscow and the Tsar, a characteristic instance being the conflict between Patriarch Nikon and Tsar Alexander Mikhailovich. Eventually, by the decree of Peter the Great in the mid-1700s, the Russian Patriarchate was abolished, and it was re-established after the Communist domination of Russia.

#### *d) The Theory of the ‘Third Rome’*

In the study that I am briefly presenting here, the important point, which takes up most of the postgraduate dissertation, is the theory of the ‘Third Rome’, which began in the fifteenth

century and mainly developed in the sixteenth century. According to this theory, in early times there was the First Rome, which was the capital of the ancient Roman Empire; then, with the transfer of the capital of the Roman State from Rome to Constantinople, the Second Rome was created; and subsequently Moscow, which is the capital of the new Christian empire, is the Third Rome.

This theory cannot stand, firstly, because there was never a First and Second Rome, but an Old and a New Rome, so there cannot be a Third Rome.

We shall, however, look at some aspects of this theory, as it is presented in this postgraduate dissertation.

First of all, we shall look at **the political aspect** of this theory, which constituted the ideology “to stabilise, one way or another, the subsequent course of the transformation of the Russian state.”

Before this theory acquired political ideology in the written documents of the sixteenth century, it had developed and been elaborated by various writers whose works were full of literary and ideological material, such as the ‘Russian Chronicles’. According to these traditions, the Prince of Moscow was descended “from the family of the Roman Emperor Augustus.”

After the fall of Constantinople to the Ottomans, the view developed that Tsar Ivan III, who married Zoe-Sophia Palaiologina, niece of the last Emperor of Byzantium “was by right the only heir and successor of the Byzantine Emperors.” Thus, as Metropolitan Zosima of Moscow asserted, Tsar Ivan “was the new Constantine of the new capital city.” Since all the Orthodox peoples, except Russia, had “been subjugated by the Turks, and Russia had thrown off the yoke of Mongol domination, she, and not the Ottoman Empire, should be the successor of Byzantium.”

In the middle of the fifteenth century “the ‘Third Rome’ theory had spread very widely in the Russian world, and had entered the hearts and ambitions of the laity and clergy, through the synaxaria and written religious accounts, letters and texts which were very widespread at that period and made an impression on the people, who trusted them and read them.” This continuing awareness led eventually to the foundation of the Patriarchate of Moscow in the middle of the sixteenth century.

Above all, it was the monk Philotheus of Pskov (late fifteenth century) who further developed and expressed the theory of the ‘Third Rome’. In accordance with this theory, the First Rome fell into idolatry, and the Second Rome, Constantinople, was punished by God because it deviated from the Orthodox faith, on account of signing the union with the Latins at Ferrara-Florence in 1438-1439. The monk Philotheus wrote to the Tsar:

“You are the only Christian Tsar in the whole world, you hold in your hands the reins of all the thrones of the Holy Ecumenical Church, which is no longer situated either in Europe or in Constantinople, but in Moscow.”

He added his views that Moscow was the Third Rome, and there would be no Fourth Rome, so Moscow “is the last Rome.” “The Third Rome, in contrast with the previous ones,

stands upright and will be the last, for there will be no fourth in the future.” The world exists because Moscow exists, and if Moscow ceases to be the centre of the Christian world, then the end of the world is approaching.

In this perspective Tsar Ivan the Terrible also considered that he was the absolute monarch, and that his power came from God. Ivan IV thought that anyone who showed a critical disposition towards him was quarrelling with God. Overall, “the Tsar felt himself to be a leader chosen and sent by God.”

This mentality, combined with what will be said about the ecclesiastical perspective of the theory of the ‘Third Rome’, produced from the sixteenth century onwards the concept of ‘Holy Russia’. ‘Holy Russia’ was closely connected with the theory of the ‘Third Rome’, and her supreme glory did not come from personal achievement, but from the fact that “the Third Rome was a creation of God chosen by Him Himself to fulfil His will.” This was the ideology of the Russian state during the sixteenth century.

The **ecclesiastical aspect** of the theory of the ‘Third Rome’ is closely connected with its political aspect. At first the theory of the ‘Third Rome’ was mainly political, and had not progressed on the ecclesiastical side to the point of undervaluing the Ecumenical Patriarchate, because they could not transgress the decisions of the Ecumenical Councils, which spoke of Old and New Rome, and not First and Second Rome, such that there would subsequently be a Third Rome. “The ecclesiastical aspect ignored the unfounded and fictitious threefold schematisation of ‘First-Second-Third Rome’, which came onto the scene at that given moment.”

As was to be expected, as time passed the theory of the ‘Third Rome’ also passed into ecclesiastical life and acted “in contradistinction to Constantinople and the Ecumenical Patriarchate.” The aim of this theory was that “the primacy of the Patriarchate ought to be abolished” and in order for this to happen “it ought to be acknowledged in some way that the Patriarchate had fallen into heresy.”

According to this theory, the First Rome fell into the heresy of Apollinarianism, as it accepted the use of unleavened bread in the Divine Liturgy, and the Second Rome lost the faith by its union with the Latins, for which reason it was punished by God by being captured by unbelievers. Thus, the ‘Third Rome’ is “something more than what the Second Rome (Constantinople) was.” In fact, during the sixteenth century most Russians “anticipated that Russian customs and traditions had reached a much higher level than those of Constantinople earlier on.”

In this perspective, other theories also developed, such as that the Tikhvin icon of the Mother of God, which was the work of Patriarch Germanus of Constantinople, but was taken away for safety during the period of iconoclasm, returned many years later to Constantinople, and later on, after the fall of Constantinople, moved to Tikhvin. Also the myth of the ‘white mitre’ developed, which had been given by Constantine the Great to Pope Sylvester, and which, after the heresy of Apollinarianism prevailed in the West (the acceptance of unleavened bread in the Divine Liturgy), was brought to Constantinople, and from there went to Moscow.

“All these traditions and accounts were continually recycled and deliberately aimed at reducing the prestige of the Ecumenical Patriarchate.” In parallel to this ‘Third Rome’ theory, there was also the vision of the transfer of the Ecumenical Patriarchate from Constantinople to Russia, but a scenario was also in circulation that a Patriarch from Russia would be established in Constantinople.”

In the end, as mentioned earlier, the Patriarchate of Moscow was founded. In fact, it is alleged that “in reality the title (of Patriarch) was obtained by force, as the Patriarch of Constantinople had become economically dependent on Russia, and at that period, in order to ensure the continuation of financial support, he proceeded, in exchange, to acknowledge the title of the Patriarch.”

A typical example of how the theory of the ‘Third Rome’ was expressed is the case of **St Maximus the Greek**, who was actually a monk of Vatopedi who went to Moscow in 1518, at the invitation of Prince Basil III, to correct the texts that had been translated from Greek into Russian. St Maximus found himself faced with an anti-Greek reaction that was “an expression of Russian chauvinism”, with result that he was condemned, he suffered imprisonment and persecution, and finally he succumbed to the many hardships that he had suffered.

During his mission he discovered many distortions in Russian society, but what should be noted is that he also confronted the theory of the ‘Third Rome’.

St Maximus advocated respect towards the canonical order and made criticisms, as well as opposing the ‘Third Rome’ theory, that the Ecumenical Patriarchate had fallen away from the Orthodox faith and surrendered to Ottoman pressure, and therefore the Patriarchate of Moscow ought to take its place.

St Maximus “strongly challenged the theory of the ‘Third Rome’ in its entirety and attempted to right the wrongs that had been done within the Church throughout the Russian ecclesiastical realm.” At the time of St Maximus there were “Russian ecclesiastical circles” who were pushing for Russia to split away from the Ecumenical Patriarchate, and St Maximus strongly opposed this objective.

It could be asserted that the theory of the ‘Third Rome’ which, as already mentioned, began in the fifteenth century and mainly developed in the sixteenth, eventually led to **Pan-Slavism**, that is to say “it was the precursor of the theory of Pan-Slavism and of the extensive Slav ethno-phyletism that followed in the coming centuries. It fuelled many political developments, and prompted various actions and activities in the wider area.”

Pan-Slavism was the movement that developed in the nineteenth and early twentieth century and aimed at the “unification of all the Slav peoples in a single federal state” under the control of Russian. In practice, it was “an ideological religious pretext.”

Pan-Slavism “aimed at the liberation of the Slavs from their oppressors”, and subsequently it aspired to their unification. Various scholars formulated the theory of the national awakening of the Slavs. A typical example is the proclamation of the Bulgarian Exarchate in 1870 and the creation of a Greater Bulgaria.

One of the typical exponents of Pan-Slavism was Nicholas Danilevsky, who stressed in his book *Russia and Europe* that “the Slavic populations ought not to turn to the West but to Russia, who is their patron and the only source of help to enable them to achieve their aim.” Russians with Pan-Slavic opinions infiltrated the whole of the Balkans, the Holy Mountain and elsewhere.

It may seem “outrageous”, but the ‘Third Rome’ theory “even found fertile ground in the period of Communist ascendancy and authority in the time of the Soviet Union.” In the international arena at that time, the Russian Patriarch could “easily influence and form trends and perceptions among the other Slavic Patriarchates,” whose countries were under the Communist regime, and were directly or indirectly dependent on Moscow. The same happened at Pan-Orthodox meetings. In this way, “the theory of the Third Rome reappeared on the scene” at that period.

At the Conference of Orthodox Churches that was held in Moscow in 1948, on the occasion of the celebration of the five hundredth anniversary of the autocephalous Russian Church, the theory of the ‘Third Rome’ was mentioned by those attending, including a Pole, a Bulgarian and a Russian. Thus, this theory continues to smoulder in Slavic populations.

Various images depicting Moscow as the ‘Third Rome’ are included in an appendix to the text of this postgraduate dissertation.

## **Conclusion**

I have tried in this article to present the central points of this postgraduate dissertation by Anastasius John Lellos. When, however, one reads this study, one sees the whole problem that existed in past centuries, but also in our own time, regarding the theory of the ‘Third Rome’. The facts are of current concern, so history ought to be our guide to the present and the future.

It seems evident, therefore, that the ‘Third Rome’ theory began in the fifteenth century, and developed mainly in the sixteenth century. It was propagated in the following centuries up until today, in various forms and by all the Russian regimes: by Tsarist theocracy, Stalinist atheism, Pan-Slavism and modern Russian diplomacy. This continues in our day, and in this manner the Ecumenical Patriarchate, which was established by the Canons of the Ecumenical Councils and by the whole of ecclesiastical practice as the first-throne Church, is undermined in many different ways.

Anyone who takes part in Pan-Orthodox Committees, or who observes what happens at meetings of representatives of the Orthodox Churches, easily discovers this subversive policy of those who are in the grip of the theory of the ‘Third Rome’. These people want to overturn the established canonical order, according to which the Ecumenical Patriarch presides at Pan-Orthodox meetings and takes initiatives, as has been granted to him by the canonical tradition of the Church and the more general ecclesiastical outlook. Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew is well aware of this, and he acts accordingly. This is the perspective in which we ought to view the granting of autocephaly to Ukraine.

Reading this postgraduate dissertation carefully, I felt sorry for all those who do not see this situation, and who support the Russian leadership in its polemic against the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

Finally, those who do not see this situation in the matter of Ukraine are suffering from naïvety or short-sightedness, or long-sightedness and colour-blindness.

Usually we Greeks, with our 'Roman' conscience and mentality, are animated by a universal spirit, without being nationalistic. We should not, however, be naïve, because then we could prove to be dangerous as regards history, the treasure of the Orthodox tradition, and the heritage of our Fathers, for the sake of individual interests and all sorts of expediencies.

In a future article I shall refer to the subject of the ecclesiological fluctuations of the Patriarchate of Moscow.