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## THE GREEK OR EASTERN ORTHODOX CHURCH.

**T**HE term "Greek" as applied to a branch of the Christian Church conveys a quite different meaning at the present time from what it did fourteen or fifteen centuries ago. In the first five or six centuries it was merely a geographical determination used in reference to that part of the Christian Church which occupied the eastern portions of the Roman Empire where Greek was the language generally spoken. When the term is used in our day it indicates not merely the national or predominating church in any particular section of country, but a church having its own distinctive doctrines, ritualistic forms and methods of government. The main body of adherents of the Greek Church is no longer to be found in Greek-speaking countries and in those sections where it had its origin. It is among the Slavs that the Greek or Eastern Church counts by far the largest number of its members, though in passing to its new home it has undergone some slight modifications. The term "Greek Church" is used by some only in reference to that branch of the Christian Church which recognizes the primacy of the patriarch of Constantinople, but as this limitation would

exclude the Russian Church, which in form and doctrine is essentially the same as the Greek Church though for now nearly two hundred years it has been independent of the see at Constantinople, we prefer to use the term in a broad sense as applying to doctrine and form, not locality. The main difference as we shall see between this branch of the Greek Church and the other branches is that in the Russian Church ecclesiastical supremacy is vested in the Czar instead of in a church dignitary.

In the first centuries of the Christian era the Church throughout Christendom was essentially one in doctrine and in form, though no doubt from the very first slight differences existed in different localities; but before the Church had completed three centuries of its history there were indications of a coming struggle between its eastern and western branches. The east and the west differed in temper and habits of thought; the eastern mind was always more given to metaphysical speculation and theorizing than the western, while the latter surpassed the former in practical matters. We can see this difference coming out in later history when the eastern Church concerned itself with barren theological speculation while the western made