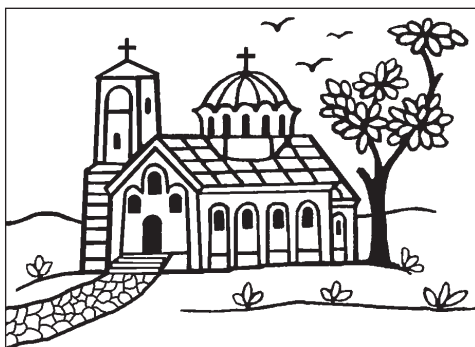


*THE ORTHODOX CHURCH AND*  
*THE ORTHODOX WAY*  
REVIEWED

by  
Hieromonk Patapios



CENTER FOR TRADITIONALIST  
ORTHODOX STUDIES

*THE ORTHODOX CHURCH AND  
THE ORTHODOX WAY*  
REVIEWED

A Traditionalist Critique of Two  
Popular Introductions to Eastern  
Orthodox Christianity

by  
Hieromonk Patapios



Etna, California 96027

2000

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## THE ORTHODOX CHURCH REVIEWED<sup>1</sup>

### Introductory Remarks

For over three decades now, *The Orthodox Church*,<sup>2</sup> by my countryman, Bishop Kallistos (Ware) of Diokleia, Spalding Lecturer in Eastern Orthodox Studies at Oxford University and former Visiting Fellow at Princeton University, has served as a helpful introduction to the history, beliefs, and practices of Orthodox Christianity. Indeed, as a blurb on the back jacket of the new edition of his book notes, it “has become established throughout the English-speaking world as the standard introduction to the Orthodox Church”:<sup>3</sup> a handy, one-volume compendium of Orthodox Church history and theology that one might confidently give to non-Orthodox or prospective converts interested in learning more about Orthodoxy. As “the standard introduction”<sup>4</sup> to Orthodoxy, it is to be found in almost any academic or public library, and certainly in any decent bookstore. But does this book deserve such a reputation?

At the outset, I should make it quite clear that, like countless others, I am grateful to Bishop Kallistos for having written this book, which I read with great enthusiasm some years ago when I first became interested in Orthodoxy. My comments on the new edition should be in no way construed as a personal attack on His Grace, or much less as a wholesale condemnation of his book. Bishop Kallistos is a Christian gentleman of the highest caliber and an Orthodox scholar who has done much to make our Faith bet-

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<sup>1</sup> “*The Orthodox Church Reviewed*” originally appeared as “A Traditionalist Critique of *The Orthodox Church*,” *Orthodox Tradition*, Vol. xvi, No. 1 (1999), pp. 39–72.

<sup>2</sup> Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church* (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1963).

<sup>3</sup> Timothy Ware (Bishop Kallistos of Diokleia), *The Orthodox Church*, 2nd ed. (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1993).

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

ter known in the West. Moreover, it is far from easy to summarize the richness and profundity of the history and teachings of Orthodoxy in the space of a single volume. While we may admit that there is no better overview of the Orthodox Church than this one, we are not thereby precluded from pointing out its shortcomings and, especially with regard to the new edition, its serious deviations from the strictest standards of Orthodoxy. Indeed, we would be failing in our duties as traditionalist Orthodox were we not to advise our readership about the need to approach *The Orthodox Church* and, in particular, this new, revised version with extreme caution. Since the book itself falls into two parts, the first dealing with the history of the Orthodox Church<sup>5</sup> and the second with Her Faith and worship,<sup>6</sup> we shall follow these divisions in our present, rather extensive critical review.

The first edition of this work was published in 1963; it was reprinted the following year with sundry revisions. Since then, it has been reprinted numerous times, also with minor revisions. In 1993, a brand new edition—that to which I have made reference—was published, with an expanded and updated bibliography that contains many helpful suggestions for further reading.<sup>7</sup> One should keep in mind that, at the time of his composition of the original book, Bishop Kallistos was a layman in the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad (ROCA), as indicated in the biographical note at the front of the first edition.<sup>8</sup> By 1993, however, he had not only long since departed from that jurisdiction, but had been Ordained a Priest and subsequently Consecrated a Bishop in the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Thyateira and Great Britain, belonging to the Œcumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople—the first Englishman since the Great Schism to attain such a position in the Orthodox Church. It is likely, therefore, that his change of jurisdic-

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 1st ed., pp. 17–199; 2nd ed., pp. 9–191.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 1st ed., pp. 201–334; 2nd ed., pp. 193–327.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 2nd ed., pp. 329–344.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 1st ed., p. 1.

tion, combined with the passing of time, which often leads to a modification of views held earlier in life, has influenced his presentation of Orthodoxy, and perhaps not always, I might regrettably say, for the better. As we proceed with our review, we shall see this suspicion confirmed in a number of ways. At this stage, let me just opine that the original edition of his book is not itself in *every* respect preferable to the new edition, as some traditionalist Orthodox believe. Many of the flaws observable in the 1993 version are present in the original, and so, while it is wise to follow the original, readers should be aware that it is by no means *as reliable* a guide to Orthodoxy as common thought would have it.

It goes without saying that Bishop Kallistos is perfectly entitled to emend his own work as he sees fit. Apart from anything else, he no doubt wanted, in the 1993 edition, to update the text, in order to take account of recent developments in the Orthodox world, and especially in Russia and Eastern Europe. Indeed, some of these corrections and additions are very welcome. Three particular examples come to mind. Firstly, he mentions the newly Glorified Saint Nicholas of Athens (1851–1932), in a section dealing with the Church of Greece.<sup>9</sup> Secondly, he discusses in the new edition the atrocities committed by the Croatian Ustaše against the Serbian people during the Second World War, which were not even mentioned in the original.<sup>10</sup> Thirdly, he rightly places Saint Nicodemus the Hagiorite (1748–1809) in the broader context of the *Kollyvades* Fathers,<sup>11</sup> which he failed to do in the earlier version.<sup>12</sup> Also noteworthy, despite the decidedly sketchy treatment of the Old Calendarist movement in both editions, is the fact that His Grace is unfair neither to the Old Calendarists nor to ROCA. Nowhere does he call us “schismatics” or “heretics”; nor does he claim, as does the Patriarchate to which he belongs, that we are un-Baptized and

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 2nd ed., p. 143.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 169.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 100.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 1st ed., pp. 110–111.

wholly outside the Orthodox Church. Indeed, in this new edition, he commends ROCA for “preserv[ing] with loving faithfulness the ascetic, monastic and liturgical traditions of Orthodox Russia, ...[a] traditional spirituality...of which western Orthodoxy stands greatly in need.”<sup>13</sup>

Having said all of this, we should make it clear that our concern, here, is to point out, with an acknowledgement of these positive points, the various flaws in Bishop Kallistos’ exposition of Orthodox history and doctrine that have gradually become more pronounced over the years since he first published this book. These flaws in many instances parallel his change in ecclesiastical allegiance. They are, in any case, serious enough to warrant extended commentary, especially in view of the great popularity of this undeniably useful book.

### Part I: History

*Methodological Flaws.* It is certainly an unenviable task for anyone to attempt to convey the astonishingly rich and fascinating history of the entire Orthodox Church, throughout the two millennia of Her existence, in so short a space as the author has allowed himself. In general, Bishop Kallistos does a good job of recounting the development of Orthodoxy over the centuries, and there is no doubt as to the breadth of his reading. What is questionable, however, is the overall perspective from which he views the history of the Church. Like the present reviewer, he is a Westerner and a convert to Orthodoxy; as such, he still carries with him some baggage from his former confession. One does not gain the impression from reading the first part of this work that His Grace really believes that Divine Providence is the central guiding principle in the historical unfolding of the Orthodox Church. Indeed, at times he is content merely to repeat the hackneyed and jaundiced assessments of the Christian East so typical of Western

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 2nd ed., p. 177.

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