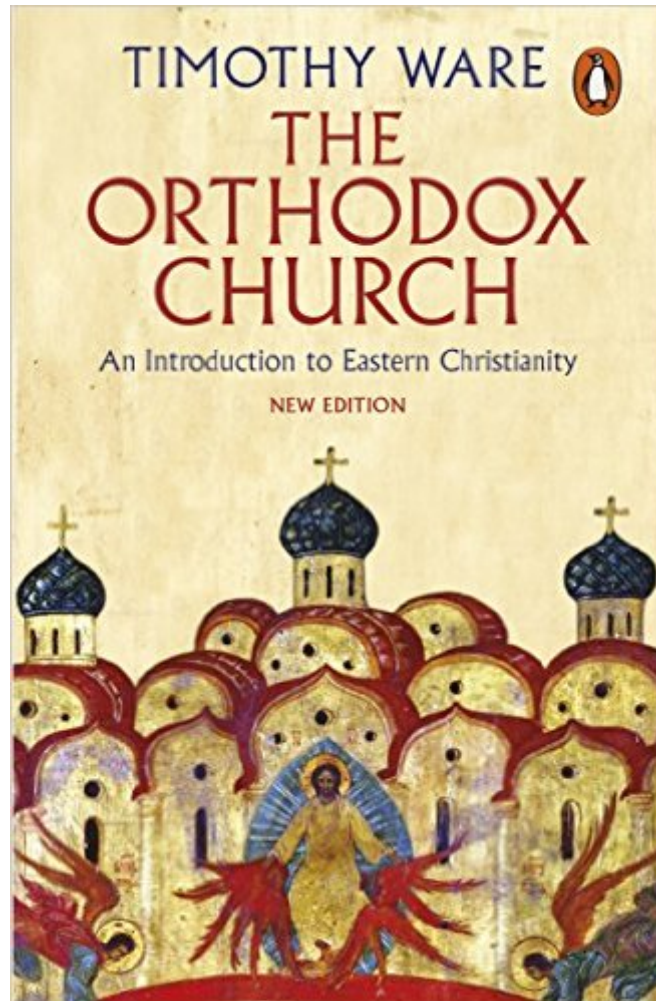


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The Orthodox Church: An Introduction To Eastern Christianity



Synopsis

The readable, deeply authoritative and bestselling book on the Orthodox Church, in a fully updated and revised Third Edition. 'Orthodoxy claims to be universal . . .' Since its first publication fifty years ago, Timothy Ware's book has become established throughout the English-speaking world as the standard introduction to the Orthodox Church. Orthodoxy continues to be a subject of enormous interest among western Christians, and the author believes that an understanding of its standpoint is necessary before the Roman Catholic and Protestant Churches can be reunited. In this revised and updated edition he explains the Orthodox views on such widely ranging matters as Ecumenical Councils, Sacraments, Free Will, Purgatory, the Papacy and the relation between the different Orthodox Churches.

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Customer Reviews

If someone asked me, "What is the one book you would recommend to someone wanting to understand Eastern Orthodoxy?" I would answer without thinking *The Orthodox Church* by Kalistos (Timothy) Ware. I remember reading this book nearly a decade ago, shortly after my conversion to Catholicism. I often wonder if I had read this book before my conversion, if I would have went down a different path and ended up Eastern Orthodox. That's a story for a different day, This book was originally published in the 1960s, and it is still the best introduction to the Orthodox Church. When I saw that it was being re-published by Penguin Books, I knew I wanted to re-read it to see what changed and how I felt reading it ten years later. The book is divided into two parts. The first part

deals with the history of the Orthodox Church and addresses topics like the Ecumenical Councils, the Great Schism, dealing with Islam, and the Twentieth Century. The second part touches on Tradition, God and Humankind, Sacraments, and the Church Calendar. I especially enjoyed reading about the Schism, because if we are going to heal this Schism we need to understand it from both sides. Kalistos Ware presents, in my opinion, the most unbiased view of the Great Schism. Bear with me for a long quote: "Rome and Orthodoxy since the schism have each claimed to be the true Church. Yet each, while believing in the rightness of its own cause, must look back at the past with sorrow and repentance. [. . .] And each side, while claiming to be the one true Church, must admit that on the human level it has been grievously impoverished by the separation. The Greek east and the Latin west needed and still need one another. For both parties the great schism has proved a great tragedy.

The last revision of this Orthodox classic was in 1997, so a new edition was very badly needed. It has now appeared, nearly two decades later. There are no great surprises and the historical half of the book is very little change from when it first was published in 1963. This will not perhaps disappoint most readers. In the doctrinal second part there are minor changes, one example is a strong plea for the need for deeper reflection on the priesthood and the role of women in the Church (page 286). A puzzling feature of the new "Orthodox Church" is however what is not mentioned, and this concerns precisely what has taken place in the last twenty years. Perhaps the publishers are at fault here for sometimes it seems as though nothing has been added since 1996 (see the statistics of the Russian Orthodox Church on page 157). Indeed the account given of the revival of Church life in Russia and eastern Europe is strangely lukewarm, beginning as it does with the heading "A Troubled Renaissance". One wonders whether a new reader of this section would grasp the enormous changes for the better which have taken place - most dramatically in the Russian and Romanian Churches but also in all Orthodox local Churches which were formerly under communist control. The statistics on page 157 give the number of Russian churches as "over 17,000" in 1996. The figure is now approximately (for every year brings an increase) 32,000. Monasteries have climbed from 337 to 820, and so on. And these monasteries include the fantastically popular Valaam, Diveevo and Optino - mentioned only in the book for their nineteenth century spiritual glories.

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