



# Orthodox Christianity Volume I: The History and Canonical Structure of the Orthodox Church

*Metropolitan Hilarion Alfeyev*

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Foreword by His Holiness Alexei II, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia

Translated from the Russian by Basil Bush

This is the first volume of a detailed and systematic exposition of the history, canonical structure, doctrine, moral and social teaching, liturgical services, and spiritual life of the Orthodox Church. The purpose of this series is to present Orthodox Christianity as an integrated theological and liturgical system, in which all elements are interconnected. Theology is based on liturgical experience, and church art including icons, singing, and architecture is shaped by theology and the liturgy. Theology and the services, in their turn, influence the ascetic practice and the personal piety of each Christian; they shape the moral and social teaching of the Church as well as its relation to other Christian confessions, non-Christian religions, and the secular world.

This volume begins with an account of the historical arc of the Orthodox Church during the first ten centuries after Christ's nativity, when the Christians of the east and west shared a common history. In examining the second millennium, the author, a hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church, delves deeply into the life of Christianity in Russia, providing a case study, as it were, of how Orthodoxy can infuse the literature, art, and philosophy of an entire culture. He then goes on to discuss the canonical structure of the Orthodox Church, describing the emergence and development of diocesan structures, metropolias, and patriarchates, as well as the contemporary structure of world Orthodoxy and the principle of canonical territory, which forms the basis of inter-Orthodox relations.

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