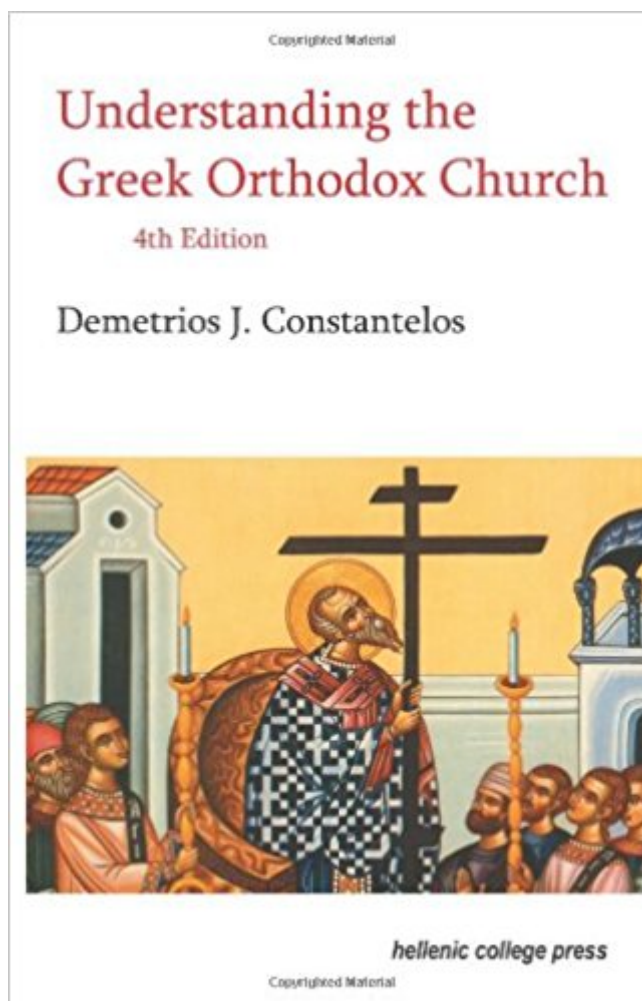


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# Understanding The Greek Orthodox Church, 4th Edition



## Synopsis

"The book . . . is a superb presentation of the faith, history, and practice of the Greek Orthodox Church that is comprehensive and readable. It is a book that should be in the religious section of every library." Choice "Addressed to the nonspecialist, as for example undergraduate college students, the book would be ideal reading for a Roman Catholic preparing for marriage with a Greek Orthodox. One would hope too that this title would be assigned as required reading in Catholic seminaries . . . Constantelos holds our attention as an experienced pedagogue." Emmanuel "The most readable and instructive monograph on the Greek Orthodox Church and faith to appear in many years . . . an honest appraisal by one who knows whereof he speaks. Recommended for anyone wanting sound information on Greek Orthodoxy and the Greek Church." Religious Studies Review "Most thought-provoking is his analysis of the formative influence of Greek thought on early Christianity . . . readers interested in the meaning and influence of this . . . church will find the book fascinating." Library Journal

## Book Information

Paperback: 364 pages

Publisher: Holy Cross Orthodox Press; 3 Sub edition (March 28, 1998)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0917653505

ISBN-13: 978-0917653506

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 0.9 x 8.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.2 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.1 out of 5 stars 5 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #638,458 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #287 in [Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Christian Denominations & Sects > Orthodoxy](#) #4085 in [Books > History > World > Religious > Christianity](#) #4177 in [Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Churches & Church Leadership > Church History](#)

## Customer Reviews

"Demetrios J. Constantelos, Ph.D., D.D., a retired priest of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, is Charles Cooper Townsend, Sr. Distinguished Professor Emeritus of History and Religious Studies, and Distinguished Research Scholar in Residence at the Richard Stockton College in New Jersey."

I was very pleased with this book. I had previously used the third edition, but the fourth edition is even better. It is a good introduction to the history, doctrine and culture of the Orthodox Church. It also devotes sufficient space to outlining the history of Orthodoxy in the United States (Chapter 5). Chapters 2 and 4 are superb chapters on some of the core beliefs and practices of Orthodoxy, and are very easy to understand. A major regret is that the author doesn't go sufficiently (in my opinion) into the Orthodox calendar, though he certainly does touch upon it. A list and subsequent explanation of Orthodox holy days, such as Lazarus Saturday or the Sunday of Orthodoxy, would be useful, since sacred time is very important to the Orthodox Church. Perhaps in future editions this will be included. The history chapter (Chapter 3) is good, but I would suggest that future editions include more information on the filioque clause, due to its importance, (it only gets one page), and might recommend expanding the conciliar history and development of Greek Orthodox theology. I would also like to see more on the development of the Ecumenical Patriarchate (including the role of St. Andrew). Ultimately, I think that the history chapter needs a major overhaul (in a fifth edition???) perhaps dividing into two chapters due to its significance. For example, one chapter on general Orthodox history, the other on the development of doctrine and relations with Western Christianity. The latter would include, among other things, a one or two-page list of the Seven Ecumenical Councils and what each did. With these rather minor exceptions, I strongly recommend this book to people interested in beginning a study of the Greek Orthodox Church.

This book is NOT an easy read, and I read a lot. I was hoping for a nice casual read and holy crap! No this is a bit complicated but I'll stagger through it :(

Demetrios Constantelos wrote an excellent book outlining the Greek Orthodox faith and delineating the differences between the Orthodox practices from Catholic and Protestant theological models. The author explained how the Byzantine tradition and patriarchs of the four main districts beside Rome created a unique doctrine of beliefs and a distinct body of liturgical practices. Constantelos is critical of the Catholic view that Rome should be the primary patriarchal shot-caller. He does not believe in the apostolic succession from the line of Peter. He relays the reasons for the Schism of 1054 and the groundbreaking work of John of Damascus. Constantelos also relays historical developments such as the Crusader sacking of 1204 which further created a barrier for ecumenical communion and reconciliation between the branches of the Christian church. Constantelos gives clear justification for unique Orthodox doctrinal tenets such the use of icons, marriage of the priests, and the role of sacraments in the church. His work is well-researched and draws on the best

theological and historical sources. This book was very informative and I learned a lot by this theological tradition that is often neglected by Western authors and theologians.

Contantelos makes a clear presentation of Greek Orthodox tradition, giving basic insight into the values, rites and spiritual practices of the oldest living church. Concerning marriage for the clergy for example, he explains why most of the common priests remain married. Even the bishops were often married until the council of Trullo in 691, when the Greek Church decreed that a bishops role required undivided commitment, without the distraction of family life. For the rest of the clergy, marriage remained the standard. As Constantelos explains, "The fact that the [Greek Orthodox] Church has not made an official pronouncement placing celibacy above marriage indicates that the conscience of the Church has accepted marriage as a more courageous state of being". (p. 73.) I came away from the book with greater respect for the depth of thought behind Greek Orthodox traditions.-author of Correcting Jesus

Mr. Constantelos has done a Major service to Christianity in general and Orthodoxy in particular in presenting this book. He clearly explains in a language that is easy to understand such subjects as 1) The divinity in history 2)The Holy Spirit 3)Life in the Church 4)The Relevance of the Church today 5)The Patristic and Monastic Aspects of the Church. The book is well ballanced and very informative.

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