

**General history of the Church. Textbook for universities
in the specialty 030600.62 “History”. In 2 vols., 4 books.
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Vol. 1: From the birth of the Church to the Reformation: I-XV centuries. Book 1: Theological and organizational formation of the Church: I-III centuries. 368 p. Book 2: Doctrinal challenges of the Church: IV-XV centuries. 829 p. Vol. 2: From the Reformation to the age of secular globalization: XVI-beginning of the XXI century. Book 1: Organizational challenges of the Church: XVI — early XX century. 538 p. Book 2: The challenge of religious syncretism: The problem of ecumenism: XX — the beginning of the XXI century. 511 p. ISBN: 978-5-02-039218-2.

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This publication in four books is the main part of the prepared by the Department of Church history of Historical faculty M. V. Lomonosov Moscow State University of the educational and methodical complex intended for students of history. This is the first complete systematized account of the General history of the Church in the I-XXI centuries in Russian literature.

The publication consists of two volumes of two parts (books) each. The first volume “From the birth of the Church to the Reformation: I-XV centuries” includes the first book “Theological and organizational formation of the Church: I-III centuries” and the second book “Doctrinal challenges of the Church: IV-XV centuries”. The second volume “From the Reformation to the age of secular globalization: XVI-the beginning of the XXI century” — books “Organizational challenges of the Church: XVI-the beginning of the XX century” and “The challenge of religious syncretism: the problem of ecumenism: XX-the beginning of the XXI century”.

First of all, this project provides a solution to specific problems of the educational process: it is intended for undergraduate students of the Historical faculty who study the discipline “General history

of the Church”, as well as for master’s students who attend the course “History of Christianity in Russia”. However, the publication is in demand in other secular and confessional universities of different faiths, where similar disciplines are studied. In addition, the project is addressed to a wider audience of researchers and all those interested in the history of the Church, since the textbook provides a broad and detailed overview of the historical development of the institution of the Church, chronologically covering the entire two-thousand-year period of its existence. The presentation includes the initial stages of Church history, the history of Orthodoxy, Catholicism, the main Protestant denominations, “Oriental” (“pre-Chalcedon”) churches (including a detailed presentation of the history of the Armenian Apostolic Church), and more.

The author’s team includes employees of the Department of Church History V.V. Simonov (responsible editor and author of many sections), G.M. Zapalsky, A.G. Zoitakis, P.V. Kuzenkov, Z. Yu. Metlitskaya, I.V. Pozdeeva, L.G. Hrushkova, E.V. Belyakova, and K.A. Avetisyan. Separate paragraphs were written using materials from Yu. S. Belyankin, E.V. Guvakova, and E.A. Zabolotny. Previously, the staff of the Department has already issued two manuals with a review of sources and a review of the historiography of the General history of the Church.

An important feature of the publication is the rejection of a narrowly confessional approach in presenting the history of the Church. The authors propose to take the history of the Church in an expanded context, as the history of the totality of Christian denominations and denominations that are considered the Church because of the content of the creed and the existing institutional structure (Episcopal or Presbyterian), without focusing on the problem of the quality of the presentation of their creeds. There is no bias in describing inter-Church contradictions, ambiguous historical events and personalities in the textbook.

While the authors refuses to clarify concepts such as Orthodoxy and heresy that allows you to include the contents of books not only the development of ideologically dominant views in a particular period, but the deviations from it that are associated with the occurrence and specificity of a number of phenomena (early Christian heresies; popular movements in the South of Europe, had pronounced religious context; religious humanism, relying on how quite Orthodox, and is clearly non-standard understanding of the truths of the Christian faith; denominational characteristics of the process of the Reformation, etc.).

The institutional approach to the Church structure creates an idea of the richness of forms that historical Christianity took in different political and socio-cultural conditions. The rejection of the dominant confessional core gives an important advantage — the ability to determine the factors that formed and continue to influ-

ence the internal unity of the Christian world in spite of dogmatic differences. The material of the textbook also provides an opportunity to consider different options for the involvement of the Church in the processes of formation of national communities, and as a result — to assess the entire historical path of Europe in a new way. Without abandoning the traditional dichotomy of “Eastern-Western Christianity” or “Eastern European-Western European culture”, the authors demonstrate the multiplicity of the impact of Christian ideas and practices, often different interpretations within the same doctrinal system, on the formation of group identities. For example, the authors highlight the role of Hesychasm in the formation of people’s Orthodox spirituality and social behavior, the Armenian Church in the consolidation of the Armenian people, and Anglicanism and Puritanism in their influence on the formation of the modern image of the Anglo-Saxon world.

Finally, the non-denominational critical historical analysis proposed in the publication contributes to solving not only educational and research tasks, but also larger-scale socio-cultural tasks of modern society: overcoming militant secularism and religious fundamentalism, various confessional biases, expanding the historical and cultural outlook, and building a harmonious and fruitful interaction between the Church and society.

The history of different Christian denominations is considered in dynamics from the moment of their origin to the present day on the basis of a wide factual material and within the framework of a single conceptual line. The authors of the publication focus on the main challenges that history poses to the Church body: doctrinal searches, relations with the state, maintaining a balance of the collective and personal both in the space of religion and instruction, and in Church management, protecting the Church institution from destructive external influences, and others. Without completely abandoning the chronological principle of organizing the material, the author’s team gave preference to the thematic one. The main line is the historical development of the organizational and doctrinal unity of Christianity: from the complete identity of the creed in a fragmented organizational structure to the progression of discreteness not only in the organization, but also in the creed.

Four books of the “General history of the Church” form an idea of the main milestones in the development of institutional Christianity: 1) the formation of the Church as an organizational and doctrinal unified social system (Vol. 1. Book 1); 2) the influence of doctrinal challenges arising within the Church organism on the development of the Church as an organizational and social system (Vol. 1. Book 2); 3) the influence of organizational challenges, whose doctrinal origins were in the Church system, on the state and dynamics of Church institutions (Vol. 2. Book 1); 4) the influence of the secular external environment, which stimulates the development of syn-

cretic tendencies in ordinary religious consciousness, on the state of Church institutions (Vol. 2. Book 2).

The main idea of each book is defined by the question on its cover: “What, how, and where to believe in order to be saved” (Vol. 1. Books 1-2; Vol. 2. Book 1) and “Do I need to believe at all?” (Vol. 2. Book 2). In the introduction to the first book of the first volume, the main definitions applied by various branches of humanitarian knowledge in relation to the Church are formulated, including the theological definition of the Church as a God-human organism. Nevertheless, as a subject of historical research, the authors of the manual proceed from the definition of the Church as a specifically Christian social institution.

The early Christian period (Vol. 1. Book 1) is interpreted in the manual as the formation of the Church as a social institution, the organizational basis of which is gradually realized and theologically formalized doctrinal truths that determine the meaning of Christian teaching. They determined the institutional structure of the Church as a universal social system that claimed to unite the entire inhabited world within its borders, called to salvation and communion with God.

Further development of the Church institution in the Middle Ages (Vol. 1. Book 2) puts at the center of the presentation issues related to the development of Church Orthodoxy and the formation of various deviations from it. The reader’s attention is focused on the dogmatic differences that throughout the Millennium introduced an element of instability in the universalist concept of Christianity and led in the organizational sphere to numerous Church divisions along confessional lines.

The main plot of the next book of the manual (Vol. 2. Book 1) — the organizational crisis of the Church structure, which shook the unity of not only the Catholic, but also the Orthodox (in the form of ethnophyletism and autocephalism) world. Special attention is paid to the phenomenon of ecumenism and its perception in Western and Eastern Christianity.

Finally, the final book of the manual (Vol. 2. Book 2) is devoted to the phenomenon of the modern multi-confessional Christian world, faced with significant resistance of the secular society to any “traditional” religious values — first in the form of modernism, then secular globalism. One of the results of this confrontation was the organizational crisis of modern institutional Christianity, stimulated both by external influence and by some internal Church processes.

When presenting the history of Catholicism, the authors depart from the compositional principle of the “history of the papacy”, which since the time of L. von Pastor began to turn into a certain historiographic dominant. The main way of presenting Catholic issues in the manual is to consider the genesis of the idea of papal supremacy and its theological form, as well as the influence it has

had on the formation of the modern organizational structure of the Catholic Church in the context of a complex discussion atmosphere of several centuries. At the same time, it is extremely important that the authors of the manual showed the coexistence of universalist ideas with the creative diversity of local traditions (in liturgy, law, folk piety, spiritual literature, etc.).

The history of local Orthodox churches in the manual covers not only Greek, but also Slavic, Georgian and Romanian areas. The General history of the Church provides an overview of the history of fourteen generally recognized local Orthodox churches, including the Cyprus, Albanian, and Polish churches. An essential component of the text is the history of Muslim conquests of the canonical territory of the Eastern Patriarchates, the study of the process of autocephalization and interaction of local churches during the anti-Ottoman liberation movements.

An important feature of the textbook “General history of the Church” is the inclusion of the history of the Russian Church in the general Christian context, despite the tradition of dividing history into General and domestic in the Russian educational system. In the vast majority of cases, training courses and textbooks were and are dedicated to either “universal history” (but — contrary to the name — without Russian), or only Russian. As a result, the logic of the presentation of events is violated, the system is lost, and the ability to compare the processes that took place in Russia and in other countries is lost. This publication is entitled “General history of the Church” with full rights, since the history of the Russian Church is present here exactly in the volume and where it is necessary to reproduce the overall picture of development. Authors in different books and topics introduce domestic material in a wide historical context. As the world significance of the Russian Church increases, the volume of these paragraphs increases from volume to volume, comparisons are made with the realities in other Orthodox churches. Much space is devoted to the history of old believers, their ecclesiology, and their various fields.

In addition to traditional stories that attract the attention of historians, the pages of the manual also cover events that are little studied in Russian science. For example, the processes of formation, development and institutional design of the Ecumenical movement are studied in detail, its influence on modern Christianity and its role in the organizational structure of secular globalization is understood. Issues such as the preservation of religious identity in an aggressive religious and cultural environment, autocephalism, and the gradual loss of the universal, universal spirit of Orthodoxy are closely examined.

A number of sections are devoted to liturgical issues. The authors introduce the main liturgical concepts into the historical context and consider the changes in their content in the course of historical development (from the worship of early Christian times up to the genesis of modern confessional liturgical practices).

The publication is provided with a significant number of illustrations. Not only references to sources are provided, but also excerpts from them (sometimes in the original language or with a parallel translation). A separate advantage of the publication is to publish in the first book of the first volume synchronistic tables of the board of bishops of the five major ecclesiastical sees (Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem) from their Foundation to the present time correlated with the reign of the Roman and Byzantine emperors.

This broad and detailed coverage of topics related to Church issues allows the use of the “General history of the Church” in seminars to combine educational and textbook text, as well as recommend it as a reference tool for a wider audience whose professional interest is related to the historical development of religion (or religious studies), Church institutions, cultural and social relations.