

Minnesota Mediterranean and East European
Monographs



**CHURCH AND STATE IN LATE
IMPERIAL RUSSIA**

*Critics of the Synodal System of Church Government
(1861-1914)*

John D. Basil

Seeds of the church-state controversy now unfolding in the Russian Federation were sown in the late imperial period. At that time, Peter the Great's synodal system of ecclesiastical government came under criticism from educated Russian society. Even defenders of the first emperor's *Ecclesiastical Regulation* recommended that changes be introduced to improve the old procedures.

In *Church and State in Late Imperial Russia: Critics of the Synodal System of Church Government (1861-1914)*, John Basil analyzes prerevolutionary opinions about church reform in church-state relations among bishops, canonists, liberals, radicals, and government officials. He also examines why debate among the critics themselves became as much of an obstacle to reforming efforts as the delaying tactics deployed by the old regime.

Evidence supporting Basil's conclusions has been drawn from letters, memoirs, and polemical writings that appeared in newspapers and journals, scholarly works of history and law, and sources drawn from the Russian State Historical Archive. The time period for the study stretches from the 1840s, with early signs of resistance coming from Metropolitan Filaret of Moscow, to 1912, with the debates in the State Duma concerning religious toleration and the education of children in church schools. The outbreak of war in 1914 distracted the Russians from questions of church and state, and the Communist leaders put an end to discussion for over seventy years.

John Basil, professor emeritus, received his Ph.D. from the University of Washington–Seattle. He taught Russian and European History at Louisiana State University and the University of South Carolina, where he was awarded the title of distinguished professor. Among his publications are *The Mensheviks in the Revolution of 1917* (Slavica Publishers, 1984). Basil is presently conducting research on questions relating to church-state relations in post-Soviet Russia.

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