

ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN BELIEF

Dogma - God is the Lord and has revealed Himself to us; blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. Hymn from Orthros.

The foundation of Christian doctrine, that is, a religious truth issuing from divine revelation and indisputably defined by the Church, is God's revelation to humanity. The fullness of His self-revelation is Jesus Christ. He reveals through words and actions as Rabbi (Teacher or Master) the mysteries of the Kingdom of God as much as we are able to comprehend.

The mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven are realized by those who are filled with the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth (John 15:26) at the event of Pentecost. They are to make disciples of all nations teaching them what Christ has commanded (Matthew 28:19). For this reason, the early Church was devoted to the apostles' doctrine (Acts 2:42). It is this doctrine of Jesus that becomes the doctrine of the Christian Church that is received by one generation and passed on to the next.

Sources of Christian Doctrine Tradition (Gk. Paradosis) - the transmission, delivery, handing down of beliefs, culture, and/or customs. In theological terms Tradition means any teaching or practice which has been transmitted from generation to generation throughout the life of the Church. More exactly, paradosis is the very life of the Holy Trinity as it has been revealed by Christ Himself and testified by the Holy Spirit.

Bible - the written word of God. It is divinely inspired authentic record of God's revelation of Himself and of His will, to humankind, composed of both the books of the Old Testament and the New Testament.

Liturgy (Gr. Leiturgia, "Work of the people") - it means more than common prayer: it means corporate action, in which every one takes an active part, is a participant and not only an attendant. The nature of this action is both corporate and personal. It is corporate because through the unity and faith of its participants it realizes and fulfills the reality of Church, i.e. the presence of Christ among those who believe in Him. It is personal because this reality is every time conveyed to me, given me for my personal edification, for my own growth in grace. Fr. Alexander Schmemmann

Councils - the chief organ whereby God has chosen to guide His people, and it regards the Catholic Church as essentially a conciliar Church. In the Church there is neither dictatorship, nor individualism, but harmony and unanimity; its members remain free but not isolated, for they are united in love, in faith, and in sacramental communion. In a council, this idea of harmony and free unanimity can be seen worked out in practice. In a true council no single member arbitrarily imposes his will upon the rest, but each consults with the others, and in this way they all freely achieve a "common mind." A council is a living embodiment of the essential nature of the Church (Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, p. 15).

Fathers - those individuals who combine these four necessary qualifications: orthodoxy of doctrine, holiness of life, ecclesiastical approval, and antiquity.

Saints (GR. agios holy) - exist within the Orthodox Church (baptized, chrismated, and a partakers of the Eucharist); have gone through a period of asceticism, a period of patient endurance, and have progressed from repentance to purity and from purity to perfect humility; attained deification by grace, theosis; didn't pretend to be great were amazed at God's mercy and His love and the immensity of His charity towards His Creation; were full of God's grace while they live and even after their death; didn't wish to make others their followers or members of their association; were undisputed theologians (they knew God); strength was not found in their virtues and/or good habits, but rather in the fact that Christ Himself lives within them; are honored by the Church; did not look for suffering by voluntary penance; sought to insure mastery of the body; and remained faithful, steadfast in faith, rooted in hope, and persevered in charity.

Canons (GR. kanona, straight wooden rod by which one could draw a straight line) - Metaphorically, a canon of the Church is a standard by which we are kept in line with the Orthodox Catholic Church and her precepts. The Canon Law of the Orthodox Catholic Church refers to the rules or laws issued by the authority of the Church (i.e. councils) in matters of faith, morals, and discipline. The compendium of the Canons of the Church is called the Rudder of the Orthodox Catholic Church.

Iconography - Almost the entire Bible would be painted in a manner, which was strictly regulated so that it correctly portrayed the Scripture. After all, no one would be allowed to replace the Holy Scripture with their own Bible, so no one would be permitted to paint their own Bible and replace the Scripture with it. Iconographic art was purposely regulated and structured so that it would honestly and accurately present the Holy Scripture and a sound interpretation of it. In time, a large portion of the Scripture would be set to paint on the walls of churches and in many cases, there would be no bare spots left on the church wall. Every nook and cranny would be filled with sound portrayals of the Scripture. Iconography became another language into which the Scripture was accurately translated, and in which it was accurately interpreted (The Icon as Scripture, Bishop Lazar Puhalo).

Hymnography - The wealth of Orthodox Hymnology is a rare phenomenon of poetic productivity and it is inseparably bound to the content of the Christian Faith. The Triptych of concern for the church hymnographers is the mystery of Divine Economy, Man, and his Salvation; it is from these three realities that the hymnographers draw the pious and artistic displays in order to create beautiful form and content of hymns. Orthodox hymnography, which is in fact ecclesiastical poetry is the great gift of God to man. Christians, at the time of their worship of the Divine, sing of their salvation. Christians in these lyrical hymns of the Church, praise God, glorify His Magnificence, express their gratitude to Him and seek His Compassion. At other times, these hymns unequivocally declare the great dogmatic truths, relate the wondrous achievements of the Martyrs of the Faith, become deeply passionate in their love of God, and place in Him their pain, problems, and aspirations (the Hymnology of the Eastern Orthodox Church, Savas Savas).

The Nicene Creed - The word Creed comes from the Latin credo meaning "I believe." From the beginning of the Christian Church, Creeds were associated with the Baptismal Rite as one had to confess his/her faith prior to initiation into the Faith. With different creedal forms existing in various regions of Christendom, it was essential for the early Church to confess the same Faith since they were members of the same body of Christ. Challenged by great controversies regarding the Son of God and the Holy Spirit, the Christian Church defined the Faith in the Nicene Creed at the First Great & Holy Council in Nicaea (325) and the Second

Great & Holy Council in Constantinople (381). This was the common Confession of Faith used throughout the entire Church (2 John 9).

I believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible. (One God Hebrews 10:38-39, Matthew 16: 25-26, 10:28; Creator “ Genesis 1:1-2, Psalm 33:6, Isaiah 45:18, Job 34: 14-15, John 1:1-3, Colossians 1:15-17; Things visible and invisible“ Hebrews 11:3, Deuteronomy 29:29, Genesis 1:1, 2:1, Colossians 1:16)

And in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all ages: Light of Light, true God of true God, begotten, not created, of one essence with the Father, through whom all things were made. (The Lord Jesus“ John 5:18-23, Revelation 19:11-16, Romans 10: 8-13; Son of God“ 1 John 4:9, John 8:58, Exodus 3:6; Light of Light“ Psalm 84:11, Isaiah 60:19-20, John 1:4-9, 8:12, 10:30, 17:21; True God of True God“ John 20:28, Titus 2:13, 2 Peter 1:1; Begotten not made “ John 1:14, 1:3, Colossians 1:16-17; of One Essence“ John 1:1, 10:30).

For us and for our salvation He came down from heaven and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became man. (Us [Man] - Genesis 1:26, 5:1, 9:6, 2:7, Matthew 10:28; Salvation“ 1 Timothy 1:15, James 5:20, Ephesians 2:8; Incarnate “ John 1:14, Hebrews 4:15, Matthew 16:13-16; Virgin Mary “ Matthew 1:23, Ezekiel 44:2, Matthew 13:55-56, John 19: 26-27)

Crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, He suffered and was buried. (Crucified“ Matthew 27:35, John 20:25, 19:17, 19; Pontius Pilate “ Luke 3:1, 23:24; Suffered and was buried “ 1 Peter 2:24; Philippians 2:5-8, Ephesians 1:7, 2:4-7)

On the third day He rose, according to the Scriptures; (Rose again “ 1 Corinthians 15:16-22, Psalm 93:1-2, Luke 23:43, Acts 2:27)

He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. (He ascended “ Daniel 7:13-14, Acts 1:3, 9, Acts 2:29-33, Hebrews 1:8)

He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead. Of His kingdom there shall be no end. (in glory “ 2 Corinthians 8:9, Matthew 25: 31-46, John 5:28-29, 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17, 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10; Judgment “ 2 Corinthians 5:10, Hebrews 4:12-13, 11:6, Matthew 12:36, 25:31-46, 1 John 1:9, Romans 12:1-21; shall be no end “ John 18:36, Hebrews 12:22-24, 28, Ephesians 1:3-4, 2:4-7, Colossians 1:13-14)

And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of Life, who proceeds from the Father, Who together with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified, Who spoke through the prophets. (the Holy Spirit “ 2 Corinthians 3:17, Acts 4:26, 2:36; Giver of Life “ Job 34:14-15, Acts 17:24-29, Genesis 2:7, John 20:22, 2 Corinthians 3:2-6; Proceeds from “ John 15:26; The Trinity Glorified “ Matthew 28:19, 1 Corinthians 12:4-6, 2 Corinthians 13:14 Ephesians 4:4-6, Genesis 1:26, Deuteronomy 6:4, John 14:23; Spoke through the Prophets “ 1 Peter 1:10-12, Acts 2:1-4, Acts 2:1-4, 33, John 18:28, 1 Corinthians 5:7)

In One Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. (Church “ 1 Corinthians 5:7-8, 10:16-17, 12:12, Genesis 17:4-5, 49:24, Isaiah 28:16, Daniel 2:34-35, 44-45, Micah 4:1-2, Matthew 16:18, Romans 6:17-18, 2:17-22, 4:5, 4:14, Hebrews 12:22-24, 13:10-18, 1 Peter 2:1-10, John 4:24, 10:4-5, 1-: 27-29, Acts 2:42, 4:24, 6:7, Galatians 6:10, Jude 3, 20-21, Titus 2:7-8,

1 Timothy 4:12-16, Colossians 1:18-20, 1 Thessalonians 5:9-11, Hebrews 12:22-24; One “ Romans 12:3-5, 1 Corinthians 10:17, 12:12-13, Colossians 1:18, 1:24, 2:19, Ephesians 1:22-23, 4:4, 4:15, John 6:63, 2 Corinthians 3:5-6; Holy “ Romans 11:16, Galatians 2:20, Ephesians 5:1-2, Titus 2:14, John 17:17-18, 1 Timothy 4:13-16, Acts 2:38, 8:17, 2 Corinthians 3:18; Catholic “ Matthew 18, 20, John 4:21-24, Hebrews 12:18, 22, Acts 2:41-47, Revelation 7:9-12, Colossians 1:28, 3:11; Apostolic “Ephesians 2:20, John 17:18-23, Mark 16:15-16, Isaiah 59:21, Acts 2:42, 8:18, 9:17, 19:6, 2 Timothy 1:6-7, 1:13-14, 1 Timothy 4:14, Hebrews 6:1-2)

I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins. (Baptism “ John 3:5, Acts 2:41, 2 Kings 5:10-14, Isaiah 1:19, Mark 16:16, Acts 22:16, John 3:5, Acts 8:36-39, Romans 6:4, 1 Peter 3:20-21, Matthew 28:19, Ephesians 1:7, Colossians 1:20, Revelation 1:5) I look for the resurrection of the dead, (Resurrection of the dead - John 5:28-29, 1 Corinthians 15:51-55, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17, Matthew 17:1-9, Mark 9:2-10, Luke 9:28-31, Acts 1:9, 2 Corinthians 5:6-9, Philippians 1:21-23, Luke 16:22-25)

And the life of the age to come. Amen. (the age to come “ John 3:15-16, 1 Corinthians 13:21, 1 John 3:2, Revelation 22:4-5, 21:3-4)

The Scriptural references above are taken from Orthodox Christian Catechism, pp. 3-72
Creation The Orthodox doctrine of creation is that God has brought everything and everyone from non-existence into being. God remains uncreated and ever existing.

Creation - Bishop Nikolai Velimirovich This world did not create itself, as nothing in it has ever created itself. This world is not the work of an evil power, nor the work of many creators, good and evil, but is the work of one gracious God. The world is divine in its origin and therefore its end shall also be in God. It comes forth from a chamber of life and will therefore end in light. When we know that the beginning is good, then we know that it tends towards good and that its end will be good.

Humanity - Man is created in the image and likeness of God. Humanity has the task (process- oriented) of reflecting God in His creation. Humanity though can only be understood in light of the revelation of God through His Son, Jesus Christ. Sin, evil, the devil, suffering and death go hand-in-hand in the Bible and in Orthodox theology. With sin, man literally, misses the mark. The fundamental truth: man and the world need to be saved.

Jesus Christ - Believing in One Lord Jesus Christ is the prime confession of faith. It is this confession, which identifies Jesus with the Most High God. Thus, we understand that Jesus the Christ is begotten before all ages. In other words, He is without beginning and without end (the Alpha and the Omega).

Incarnation - Jesus is born from the Virgin Mary because He is the divine Son of God, the Savior of the world. Jesus is not understood as a “mere man.” He is indeed a real man, a whole and perfectly complete man with a human mind, body, and soul. But He is the man, which the Son and Word of God has become. Thus, the Church confesses that Mary is the Theotokos, which means literally the one who gives birth to God.

Redemption - Christ’s victory over death is man’s release from sins and man’s victory over enslavement to the devil.

Resurrection Christ is Risen from the dead! This is the main proclamation of the Christian faith. It forms the heart of the Church's preaching, worship, and spiritual life. The Orthodox Church believes in Christ's real death and His actual resurrection. In His resurrection Jesus is a new and glorious form. Christ's resurrected humanity is full of life and divinity. It is humanity in the new form of eternal life of the Kingdom of God.

Apostle's Witness - The apostles beheld the risen Lord for forty days. They were personally given thousands of wonderful facts, which, gathered together, affirmed that Christ is God and man, the Son of the living God, the Savior of men, who loves them as He saves them. 4/14

Ascension - The ascension of Jesus Christ is the final act of His earthly mission of salvation. The doctrinal meaning of the ascension is the glorification of human nature, the reunion of man with God.

Judgment - It is Christ who will judge not God the Father. Christ has received the power of judgment as the One who is truly man, the One who has suffered every temptation of this world and has emerged victorious.

Man's final judgment and eternal destiny is depends solely on whether or not he loves God and his brethren. The conditions of the final judgment are already known. Christ has given them Himself with absolute clarity (Matthew 25:31-46; Gospel Reading for Meatfare Sunday).

Second Coming of Christ - All nations, without exception, shall be gathered before Him. But it will be of no use for anyone, at the time, to accept and confess the great divinity of our Lord, if he had denied Him on earth. Now is the time to accept the divinity of Jesus. 3/12

Judgment - God, in His unchanging mercy, waits for sinners to come to themselves and repent, and prepare for that day that will not come again. That day is not like the many days that are given to man for repentance and preparation for the meeting with God, it is the day not for repentance but for judgment.

The Kingdom of God - Christ's kingdom is not of this world. The Kingdom of God therefore is a Divine Reality. It is the reality of God's presence among men through Christ and the Holy Spirit.

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