

**St. Nicholas Antiochian Orthodox Christian Cathedral • Los Angeles, California**

**Fall 2021 Adult Study:**  
**Orthodox Christian Faith and Practice**

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Wednesdays: 7:15 to 8:30 p.m.  
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TEXT: Hopko, Father Thomas. *The Orthodox Faith*. Four volumes. Revised and expanded by David C. Ford. Available in print or online at [oca.org/orthodoxy/the-orthodox-faith](http://oca.org/orthodoxy/the-orthodox-faith)

**Oct. 6 Sources of Christian Doctrine (Vol. I pp. 18-38 new edition; Vol. I pp. 8-31 1981 edition)**  
Revelation, Tradition, Bible, Councils, etc.

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## NOTES

- Revelation
  - Matins: “God is the Lord and has revealed Himself to us...”
  - Not his innermost essence (which is unknowable)
  - We are shown what we can see and understand of His divine nature and will
  - Most fully expressed by the incarnation of the Word
    - A messenger (delivering God’s word)
    - A prophet (speaking of what would come to pass)
    - With power as God (the rod of Jesse)
    - Both God and Man
  
- Tradition
  - Definition: The ongoing life of God’s People
  - Definition (Literal): That which is passed on and given over
  - Fulfilled and completed by Christ and the Church
  - From the apostles to us today
  - Separate from tradition (little “t”) which are just human customs and not dogma
  - The bible holds first place among Holy Tradition followed by:
    - Liturgical life and its prayer
    - Dogmatic decision and acts of its councils
    - Writings of the Church Fathers
    - Lives of the Saints
    - Canon Laws
    - Iconographic tradition

- Bible
  - Means “Book” (really a collection of books written over many centuries)
  - The history of who God is and of his interaction with his creation
  - Contains law, prophecy, poetry, history, stories, prayers, letters and symbolical visions.
  - Old Testament
    - The Law (Pentateuch – meaning five books). Books of Moses.
    - The History (Joshua, Judges, Ruth, First – Fourth Kingdoms), Tobit, Judith, Esther, Maccabees (the last four not being found in the Protestant Bible)
    - Wisdom (Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Wisdom of Solomon, Wisdom of Sirach)
    - Prophecy (sometimes divided by “Greater and Lesser” prophets)
  - New Testament
    - Four Gospels
    - Acts
    - Epistles of St. Paul
    - General Epistles
    - Revelation
  - What is the Apocrypha? Orthodox and Protestant define this differently.
  
- The Liturgy
  - Definition: Gathering or assembly of people who are called together to perform a specific task. Also defined as common work or action.
  - Church Definition: Common work of God done by the people of God.
  - Old Testament: Liturgy was the official worship in the temple of Jerusalem according to Mosaic law. Note: Synagogues were not where worship was done, they were places for prayer and for teaching.
  - New Testament: Reforms the liturgical life in a new and eternal perspective.
  - We still read and sing prayers and hymns from the Old Testament in our liturgy (but they are sung in the context and light of Christ).
  - The sacrifice of the body and blood of Christ replace the animal sacrifices in the Old Testament temple.
  - The Lord’s Day (Sunday) replaces the Jewish sabbath (Saturday).
  - The Church is the living experience of the Christian sacramental and liturgical life. In the Liturgy, the Bible and Holy Tradition come alive and are given to the living experience of the Christian People.

- The Councils
  - Were called to settle difficulties and make decisions by reaching consensus of opinion among all the believers.
  - Attended by the bishops representing all the people.
  - The first council was held by the apostles (recounted in Acts 15) to decide on the conditions by which gentiles could enter membership in the church.
  - There were many local councils to address local issues.
  - Seven councils are considered “Ecumenical” which have received universal approval of the entire Church:
    - **Nicea (325)** – Formulated first part of Creed, defining divinity of the Son of God.
    - **Constantinople I (381)** – Formulated the second part of the Creed, defining the divinity of the Holy Spirit.
    - **Ephesus (431)** – Defined Christ as the Incarnate Word of God and Mary as Theotokos.
    - **Chalcedon (451)** – Defined Christ as Perfect God and Perfect Man in one person.
    - **Constantinople II (553)** – Reconfirmed the Doctrines of the Trinity and of Christ
    - **Constantinople III (680)** – Affirmed the True Humanity of Jesus by insisting upon the reality of His human will and action.
    - **Nicea II (787)** – Affirmed the propriety of icons as genuine expressions of the Christian faith.
  
- The Fathers
  - Definition: Saints who were theologians and spiritual teachers who defended and explained doctrines of the Christian Faith.
  - All of the holy fathers, whether they are classified as theological, pastoral, ascetical or mystical gave their teachings from the sources of their own living Christian experience.
  - The writings of the Church Fathers are not infallible, and it has even been said that in any given one of them some things could be found which could be questioned in the light of the fullness of the Tradition of the Church.
  - Nevertheless, taken as a whole, the writings of the Fathers which are built upon the biblical and liturgical foundations of Christian faith and life have great authority within the Orthodox Church and are primary sources for the discovery of the Church’s doctrine.
  - Examples: John Chrysostom, Basil the Great, Gregory of Nyssa, Ignatius of Antioch, Athanasius, etc.

- The Saints
  - Source: “Be holy, for I your God am holy” (Lev 11:44; 1 Peter 1:16)
  - Definition: People who literally share the holiness of God.
  - Apostles (sent to proclaim the faith)
  - Evangelists (announce the good news of the Gospel of Christ)
  - Prophets (inspired to speak God’s word to men)
  - Confessors (suffer for the faith)
  - Martyrs (die for the faith)
  - Holy Ones (monastic saints)
  - Righteous (saints within the laity)
  
- The Canons
  - Definition: Role or norm or measure of judging.
  - In western Christianity they take on a juridical context.
  - In eastern Christianity they are guidelines to help us properly respond to spiritual truths, and as such over time the way those truths are fulfilled has changed as the conditions change around us.
  - Types:
    - Dogmatic or doctrinal
    - Practical
    - Ethical
    - Structural
  - Some may be changed or altered over time as they are more structural in nature for example like those identifying how many patriarchates there would be.
  - Others are and unchanging – typically those speaking to morals and ethics (like the prohibition of the sale of Church sacraments)
  - Others are dogma and unchanging (though the way the church expresses these dogmatic statements sometimes do evolve over time).
  - In viewing the canons of the Church, the key factors are Christian knowledge and wisdom, which are borne from technical study and spiritual depth.
  
- Church Art
  - Includes iconography, music, architecture, sculpture, needlework, poetry, etc.
  - The Icon is Orthodoxy’s highest artistic achievement
    - A gospel proclamation,
    - A doctrinal teaching
    - A Spiritual Inspiration
    - Not a pictorial portrayal or photocopy of history. Rather, an expression of the eternal and divine reality, significance and purpose of the given person or even depicted.
  - Music – sing praises to our God. Multiple forms and style. A medium to convey the text of the hymnography.
  - Architecture – used to emphasize God is with us.
    - Shape of the Church
    - Domes vs steeples
    - Placing of Icons