


# Foundation of Divine Knowledge



*Faith based on  
Divine Knowledge*

# Why?

- ✦ Why do we spend time with Catechism sessions?

- ✦ **Our Salvation:**

We need and want to know how to please God and how to save our souls for eternal life.

- ✦ Demands

a **knowledge** of the true God,

a true **faith** in Him, and

a **life** based on this faith with **good works**.

# Faith + Works

- ✦ Foundation is **faith**. Why?
- ✦ Without faith it's impossible to know and please God.
- ✦ Also, works based on faith essential. Why?
- ✦ James tells us ***“faith without works is dead”*** (James 2:20)
- ✦ Jesus said, ***“You will know them by their fruits....every good tree bears fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. therefore by your fruits you will know them.”*** (Matt 7:16-20)



# Faith

- ✦ What is faith?

- ✦ Faith is beyond the level of our senses.

Does not contradict our senses but is beyond them.

Involves a higher power.

- ✦ How are our senses limited?

To physical things.



As Paul put it, *We walk by faith, not by sight.* (2 Cor 5:7). *“Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”*

- ✦ Faith is beyond level of the Intellect, our mind.

Does not contradict intellect but leads us to a higher level of understanding that mind cannot reach.

- ✦ Must be able to trust in what is unseen as though it were seen. In that which is hoped for as if it were present.

# Faith

- ✿ Don't we often feel what the mind cannot understand is unreal, and maybe just an old-fashioned superstition?  
Does idea of Faith make you a bit uncomfortable?
- ✿ How do we know what to believe?

# Faith

- ✿ In reality, our **mind is limited** and can only understand in limited ways. Our mind must accept some things it cannot understand.
- ✿ What are some things we accept but don't understand?
  - ✿ Accept death but cannot understand it. Do not understand miracles but witness them.
- ✿ We must respect the mind but also appreciate its limits.
- ✿ For faith we need a **humble mind**.  
Cannot allow our mind to limit our faith in God.
- ✿ A prideful mind blocks faith and knowledge of God.

# Faith

- ✦ What is the foundation of faith for Christians?
- ✦ **Gospel teachings** about Jesus Christ and **hope in eternal life** in God's Kingdom.
- ✦ What are some things our mind must accept that it cannot fully understand?
- ✦ One is **Incarnation of God, God became man** so we could be renewed and become reunited with Him.
- ✦ Is this really understandable?  
How can God become man?
- ✦ This is what is documented for us is the Gospel.



# Faith

- ✿ Even though you cannot see God, With faith you can have confidence that He is **always before you** and that you can act knowing He will see and hear you.
- ✿ Is this blind faith?
  - ✿ No. You can see the wonder of Creation, you can experience His energies, you can read how he has been revealed to us in Scripture recorded by witnesses.
- ✿ With faith, You can know that He is with you in the midst of your work, just as He promised when He said, *"I am in the midst of them"* (Matt 18:20). God can be found in all things and all places.



# Faith

- ✿ When we live with faith we **live in confidence** that He is indeed **in front of us always**.  
This differentiates a believer and a non-believer.
- ✿ Life in faith is life in **fellowship with Holy Spirit**.
- ✿ Where do we know His Spirit is continually working?
  - ✿ In the Sacramental life of **Church** which is the **Body of Christ** on earth. We don't see it but believe its workings.

# Faith



There is more. Paul says, “*Do you not know that your **body** is the **temple** of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God?*” (1Cor 6:19)

- ✦ Do you believe your body to be a temple?
- ✦ What do we say when one dies
  - ✦ his Spirit has left his body. Where does it go?
- ✦ Faith concerns the **destiny of our Spirit**, does it go to heaven or hell - is it joined with God or separated from Him.
- ✦ **Faith leads us** to return to the **renewed body** in the resurrection for eternal life after the last judgment. To speak of **eternal life demands faith.**

# Faith

- ✦ Faith means you **seek God in all matters**. Jesus said, *“For without Me you can do nothing.”* (John 15:5)
- ✦ St. Paul says, *“For it is **God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.***
- ✦ Our work is to **participate** with God **in His work** for us. This is our participation with the Godly nature, with the Holy Spirit, participating with God at work.
- ✦ St Paul says, *“For we are **God’s fellow workers**”* (1 Cor 3:9)
- ✦ Any work in which God does not participate is **not a holy or blessed work**.
- ✦ We are **tools in His hands** doing **His will**.
- ✦ Do you seek God’s help in all you do?



# Faith

- ✦ What is a believer?
  - ✦ One who **depends on God** and yields **everything** to Him.
  - ✦ One who says, “*My life is the work of your hands and it is now between Your hands, do with it what You want.*”

# Faith

- ✦ How can we test our faith?
  - ✦ By the extent you care about your **life in Eternity**
  - ✦ Ask yourself, “**Is this your primary concern?**”
  - ✦ Or is it one that **focuses on this world** and how successful you are, how you are seen by others, and how you enjoy its pleasures?
  - ✦ Or, can you truly say,  
“I am most interested in **preparing myself for eternity** and destiny in the other world. I **do not fear** end of this world or the reality of my death” ?

# Faith

- ✦ What must we do to nurture Faith?
- ✦ This is **greatest gift** we have received from Christ.
- ✦ He showed us **the way** and established **His Church** so we could nurture faith.
- ✦ Why catechism is so important. We need to know clearly **who Christ is** and **what He taught** us about nurturing our faith so we can face death just like he did and anticipate our resurrection.
- ✦ We must **address** openly all things that give us **doubts** and cripple faith. Think about them!



# Faith

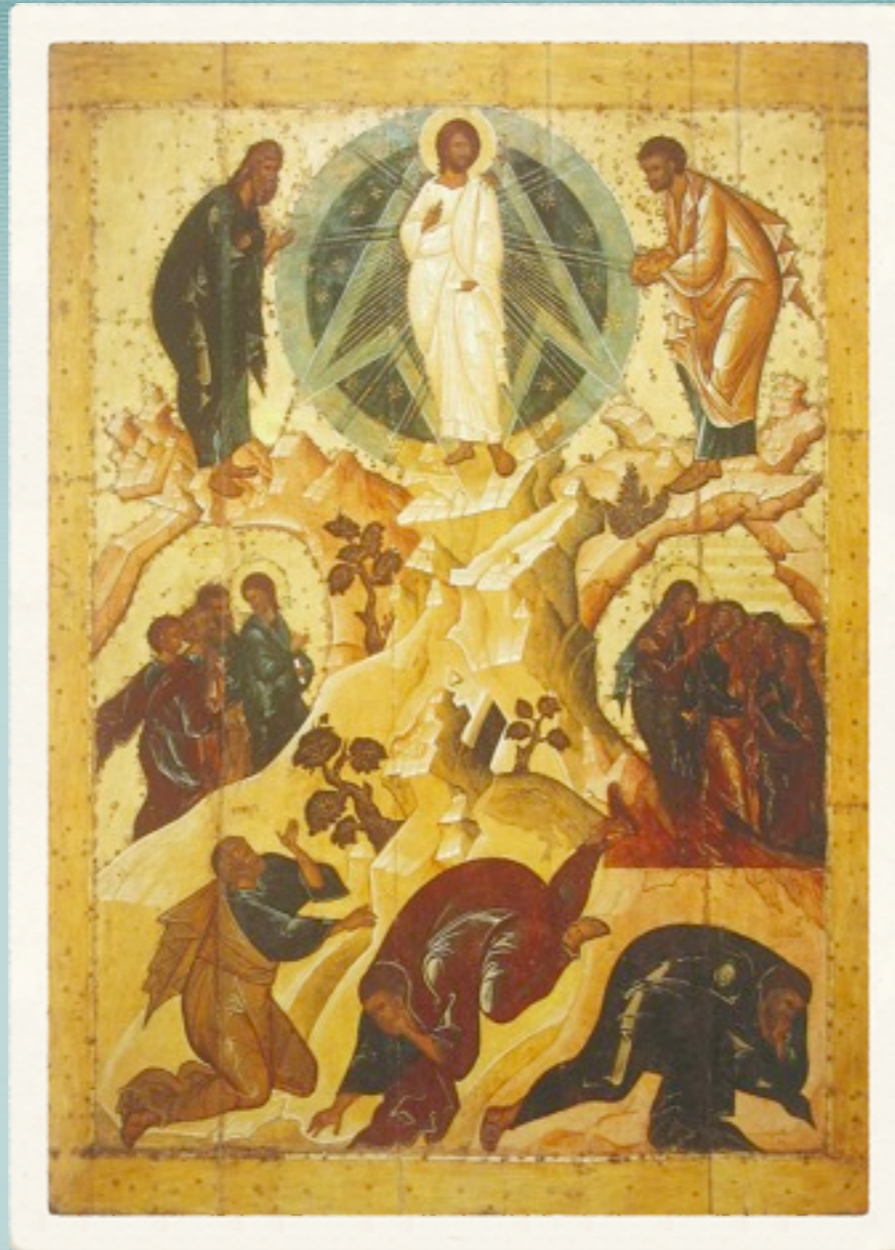
- ✦ How do we overcome our doubts?
  - ✦ By learning from those to whom have received divine revelation, who have a personal relationship with God.
- ✦ Think of these people as the Orthodox scientists. We call them the Saints, Prophets, Church Fathers.
- ✦ They are part of an **unbroken Church history** from the time of Christ and Apostles we call the Orthodox Church.



# Primary Resources

- ✿ *Catechism*, Saint Cyril of Jerusalem - 4th century
- ✿ *Catechism of the Orthodox Church*, Fr. Tikhon
- ✿ *Orthodox Creed for Today*, Fr Anthony Conairis
- ✿ *The Mystery of Faith*, Metropolitan Hilarion Alfeyev
- ✿ *Dogmatic Theology of the Orthodox Church*,  
Fr. Michael Pomazansky





Who are we to Trust?

# What is a Saint?

- \* One who has been **glorified**. What does this mean?
- \* A spiritual state of visitation of the Holy Spirit, where the Spirit prays within him - noetic prayer.
- \* Expression of theosis where one truly becomes a **god-seer**.  
True theologian.

# Revelation as Experience

- \* Since saints are glorified they each have **same** experiences of the energies of God congruent with Scripture.
- \* We say their writings are **divinely inspired**.
- \* How do they express this knowledge?
  - \* Use **descriptive language** that is not same as the actual experience.



Saint John receiving vision  
recorded in Book of Revelation

# Revelation as Experience



- \* Parallel with scientific study.
- \* How do scientists gain their knowledge?
  - \* Scientist looks at what he knows - studies, gathers information about it from experience. Based on empirical knowledge.
- \* Same for Saints. Like trained scientists, they are glorified observers.
  - \* Prepare themselves, Have vision of God, describe it for the benefit of others to repeat it.
  - \* Only accept empirical phenomena.
  - \* Illumination is an empirical phenomenon. So is glorification

# Revelation as Experience

- \* How does one describe an intimate experience of God?
  - \* **indescribable** - can only use **symbolic concepts** of created world.
- \* Leads to **apophatic** theology.  
No worldly concept can fully describe what is indescribable.  
Experience of God is beyond all affirmations and negations.



# Revelation as Experience

- \* How do we begin to deepen our faith & overcome doubts?
  - \* Accept experience of those who are **experienced**, glorified & **seek** their help.
- \* Later, we acquire **own** spiritual experience under their guidance.
- \* Commonly gained through **Sacraments and asceticism** - reading, prayer and fasting - **Orthodox way of life**.
- \* **Everyone** can become a saint with knowledge of God.

# Revelation as Experience

- \* Here is how Saint Theophan the Recluse puts it:
- \* *Here is the **path** by which the Spirit of God leads to **perfection** those who receive Him ...*
- \* *The beginning of it all is **repentance**,*
- \* *the middle of this work and ascetic struggle is **cleansing of the heart** from passions and its **saturation with virtues**,*
- \* *and the end is the holy mystery of **communion with God**...*



Who are the Prophets?

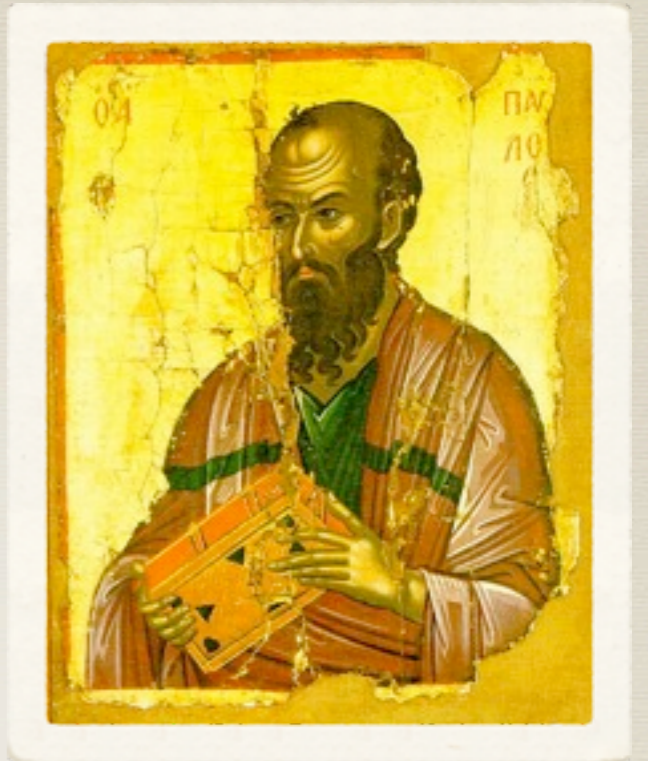


# Prophets

- \* One who is in communion with God, knows His will by revelation, has arrived at glorification and becomes an authoritative teacher.
- \* Moses, David, Elijah, Ezekiel, Isaiah, Jonah.....
- \* Prophecy is Grace working in the Church. Paul writes:
  - \* *And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, **second prophets**, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healing, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues... (1 Cor 12:28-30)*
- \* Gift of Prophecy is not simply a vision but a **spiritual state**.



# Prophets

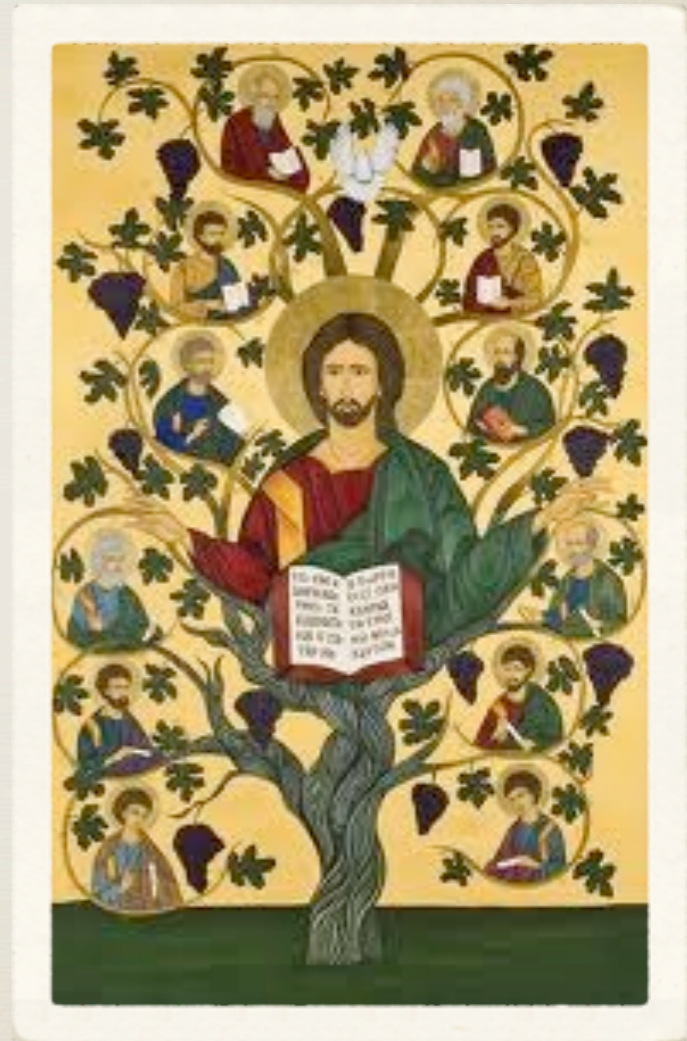


- \* Paul writes,
- \* *Desire **spiritual gifts**, but especially that you may **prophecy**...he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men... that the church may receive deification.* (1 Cor 14:1-5)
- \* We are **all** called to spiritual state of prophecy.
- \* Writings of Prophets gives us knowledge about God. They foretold the coming of the Son of God.

Who are the Apostles?

# Apostles

- \* Christ chose **12** Disciples.
  - They lived with Him.
  - He taught them.
  - He sent them out to preach.
  - They continued His work after Pentecost.
- \* What did they observe in three years?
  - \* Saw miracles,
  - \* Some saw Him transfigured on Mt Tabor.
  - \* Shared Last Supper.
  - \* Witnesses of Resurrection & Ascension.
  - \* At Pentecost became partakers in Holy Spirit.



# Apostles

- \* Though Christ's guidance progressed from purification to illumination and exalted to glorification.
- \* Before Pentecost & Resurrection how did they see Him?
  - \* According to the flesh.
- \* After Pentecost?
  - \* See the God-man Christ **in the Spirit** within the Light.

# Apostles

- \* Christ taught those outside the 12 in **parables**, but Apostles granted 'to know the **mysteries** of the kingdom of God.' - Topic of Gospel of John.
- \* In beginning He teaches with Words, but later promises Apostles saying, "*There are some standing here who will not taste death till they **see the kingdom of God present with power***" (Mark 9:1)

# Apostles

- \* What did He mean when He told them, "*You are the **light of the world***"? (Matthew 5:14-16)
- \* They are **illuminated**, like burning candles, they have unceasing remembrance of God within them.
- \* Were the Apostles philosophers?
  - \* No. **Divinely inspired** through experience of Pentecost.
- \* Apostolic life, tradition, and succession is **participation in gifts of Holy Spirit.**



# Who are the Patristic or Church Fathers?



# Patristic Fathers

- \* **Successors of the Apostles**, not simply great scholars.
- \* Apostolic Fathers: Clement of Rome, Ignatius of Antioch, Polycarp of Smyrna;
- \* Greek Fathers: Irenaeus of Lyons, Clement of Alexandria, Origen of Alexandria, Athanasius of Alexandria, Gregory the Theologian, Basil the Great, Gregory of Nyssa, John Chrysostom, Cyril of Alexandria, Maximus the Confessor, John of Damascus, Gregory Palamas
- \* Latin Fathers: Tertullian, Cyprian of Carthage, Hilary of Poitiers, Ambrose of Milan, Jerome of Stridonium, Augustine of Hippo, Gregory the Great, Isidore of Seville

# Patristic Fathers

- \* Received the Holy Spirit, participated in glorifying energy of God, acquired **empirical knowledge** of God.
- \* **Defended faith** against heretical teachings.
- \* Able to **Lead** their **spiritual children** to the experience and knowledge of the Triune God.
- \* Were **contemplative, watchful, and ascetic**.
- \* Should **not** view Fathers as **speculative thinkers**, but study them in context of **patristic tradition**.
- \* Their writings about God are **divinely inspired** like Scripture.

# Patristic Fathers

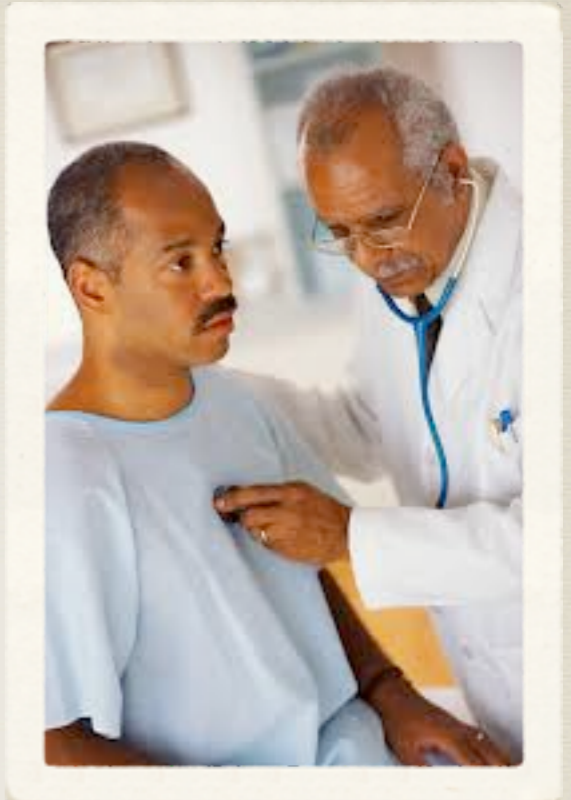
- \* Are the Fathers infallible?
  - \* **No.** They are **unerring** - can guide unerringly.
- \* Have constant remembrance of God and unerring guidance of Holy Spirit.  
Only in issuance of spiritual guidance they cannot make mistakes.
- \* Infallibility of Church applies only to teachings on Holy Trinity, divine grace, diagnosis of infirmities of the human personality, hell and paradise, incarnation, saints, Theotokos and everything connected with experience of glorification.
- \* **Does not include scientific knowledge!**

# Patristic Fathers

- \* Not philosophers.
- \* Did not accept philosophical ideas of Plato and Aristotle.
  - \* Soul was immortal by nature or the universe always existed.
- \* Familiar with ancients and philosophers but continually cast hostile remarks at them - St. Athanasius mocks them.
- \* Only interested in bringing their spiritual children from purification to illumination and from illumination to glorification.

# Patristic Fathers

- \* Medical sciences more akin to patristic theology than all the philosophies of the world. How so?
- \* Fathers were empirical. Relied on experience of Holy Spirit which they acquired in the Church. Used this for healing of souls.



# What is an Ecumenical Council?

# Ecumenical Councils

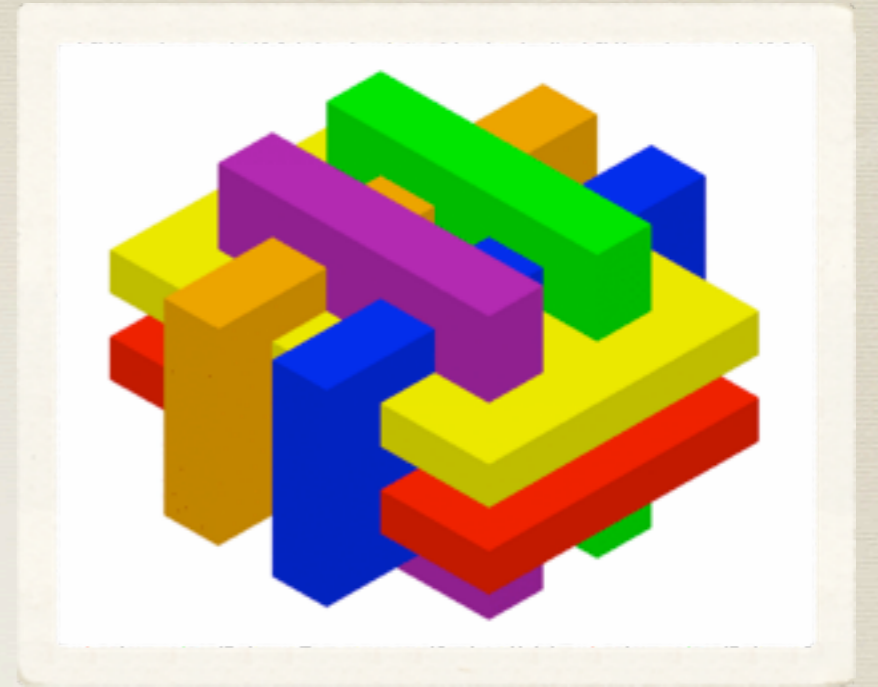
- \* Gathering of Patristic Fathers
- \* Their conclusions are considered Dogma, truths relating to God. Why?
- \* Divine inspiration of the Councils is connected with the presence of Fathers who were divinely inspired.
- \* Protected the true teachings of Apostles about nature of Christ and gave us the Creed.



What is Holy Tradition?



# Holy Tradition



- \* Prophets, Apostles, Ecumenical councils, Scripture, writings of Fathers, Liturgical rites and sacraments, hymns, icons - all part of Holy Tradition.
- \* Orthodoxy is beautiful mosaic based on **human experiences** of God.
- \* All based on **Revelation** with purpose to **lead us** to purification, illumination, and glorification - **theosis**
- \* **Brings fuller meaning to Scripture**

# Holy Scripture

# Holy Scripture



- \* What is Holy Scripture?
  - \* Divine Revelation
  - \* Books of the OT and the NT determined by the Church through the holy Fathers.
- \* Did Paul know his epistles would be included in the canon of the NT? Why did he write them?
- \* Did the Gospel writers know their writings would be included as well?
- \* Why did the NT come into existence?
  - \* To counter the heretics who began writing their own books and provide basis for sound guidance.
- \* When was canon of NT determined?

# Scripture & Revelation

- \* Are these words that God dictated to Prophets & Apostles?
- \* Neither OT or NT was dictated by God. Writers were not God's secretaries.
- \* Recorded their experiences in **own words** - divinely inspired.
- \* often used verbal concepts to describe what is indescribable.
- \* Is Scripture about revelation or is it the revelation itself?



# Scripture & Revelation

- \* Scripture cannot be identified with revelation. This according to Fathers is heretical.
- \* It's created word **about revelation**.
- \* Scripture is not Pentecost but it speaks using man made words **about Pentecost**.
- \* Revelation transcends Holy Scripture because the **lived experience** is revelation.
- \* Essay about your vacation is not the same as the vacation.



# Revelation



- \* Must clearly **distinguish** between **created** and **uncreated** things.
- \* To **fully understand** words written about **revelation** what is necessary?
- \* One needs to be illuminated or glorified. Why?
  - \* If not they will only ascribe meaning appropriate to the created world.
- \* What does this imply about study of Scripture?

# Scripture & Revelation

- \* Holy Scripture includes divinely inspired concepts written by divinely inspired individuals to teach us about the **uncreated**, not created, **truth**.
- \* **Cannot be used** to support any kind of philosophy or science.
- \* Is understanding Scripture same as understanding God?
- \* Not a reference Book one can read and understand God.

# Scripture & Revelation

- \* In Middle Ages the **Western Church** identified Holy Scripture with revelation which created many problems with appearance of modern science.
- \* Earth is 6,000 years old
  - Six days of creation
  - Earth is center of universe
  - Man evolved from other creatures
- \* There are many things described in Scripture that are no longer accepted by modern science.
- \* Does this invalidate the truths of Scripture?



# Aim of Scripture

- \* How are we supposed to use Scripture?
  - \* **Ascetically**, to help us reach a higher spiritual state. The aim is ascetical.
  - \* As a **therapy**, a way of healing our fallen nature, to help us develop life of faith.
- \* Contains catechetical and therapeutic wisdom divinely inspired by those who wrote them. They are truths, but must go beyond them. The words lead us to our own experience and relationship with God through a living faith.

# Divine Inspiration



Paul tells us: *All **Scripture** is given by **inspiration of God**, and is profitable for **doctrine**, for **reproof**, for **correction**, for **instruction in righteousness**.* (2 Tim 3:16)

- \* Scripture was written with divine inspiration to **give us direction** to attain illumination, to be united with God - "*for reproof, correction and instruction.*"
- \* The books Church Fathers accepted as Scripture have been carefully selected for this purpose.

# Interpretation



Romanides says,

- \* *If, those who read Holy Scripture every day, **do not understand the methodology that leads to glorification** and how the body can become a sacred relic, they **cannot understand Holy Scripture.***
- \* Scripture belongs within the Church's acts of worship
- \* Apostles teach that interpretation is the gift of grace. - a prophetic gift.

# Aim is glorification

- \* How are we to reach glorification?
- \* Use Holy Scripture as a **guide book** along with writings of the Fathers to affirm our faith.
- \* **Seek guides** to aid us in proper spiritual growth.
  - \* Relationship of Spiritual fathers and their children is like relationship between doctor and medical student.
- \* In addition to Scripture we have the **Services**, **Sacraments** which are direct encounters with Holy Spirit and our own **ascetic practices** as aids.
- \* All **aim** to help us along the steps of purification, illumination, and glorification - Theosis

# Sola Scriptura

# The Bible



- ✦ True or False?

*“The Scriptures of the Old and the New Testament were given by inspiration of God, and are the only sufficient, certain and authoritative rule of all saving knowledge, faith and obedience.”*

- ✦ (Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminaries Abstract of Principles)

- ✦ Sola Scriptura - Foundation of Protestantism  
16th Century Invention

- ✦ Orthodox **do** believe Scripture is “Truth” inspired by God.  
But **not** *“only sufficient, certain and authoritative rule.”*

# Sola Scriptura

- ✦ Problems with this idea
  - ✦ 1. Presupposes Scripture is **self-authenticating**
    - ✦ Forgets that Church determined the canon of the Bible which took centuries.  
Bible supports Church Tradition.
    - ✦ Forgets Church is Body and life of Christ.  
Rejects authority of Church which is rejecting Christ.
    - ✦ Forgets Apostolic beginning of the Church  
Permits a break from fullness of Apostolic Tradition.


# Sola Scriptura

- ✦ 2. Presupposes Scripture is **self-interpreting**.
- ✦ Not even true in science - theory of relativity & uncertainty principle.
- ✦ Texts do not exist in abstract.  
Proper interpretation comes from Tradition.  
Question is whose tradition.



# Sola Scriptura

- ✿ Now over 30,000 denominations due to different interpretations of Scripture with new traditions.



Without context, Scripture is just another set of ancient texts.

- ✿ Bible must be interpreted in context of Church and its Holy Tradition.

Tradition of Apostles is only tradition that gives authority to Scripture.

Bible is a product of Christ's Church to help us.

# Sola Scriptura

- 3. Presupposes Scripture **intended to be all sufficient guide**
- OT gives detailed instructions about worship.  
NT provides no details about the eucharist  
*Do this in remembrance of Me.* (Luke 22:19)
- Early Church came together on the first day of the week to break Bread, but most evangelicals only celebrate once a month or less. (Acts 20:7)
- If Paul's letters were intended to be self-sufficient wouldn't he have provided more details?



# Sola Scriptura



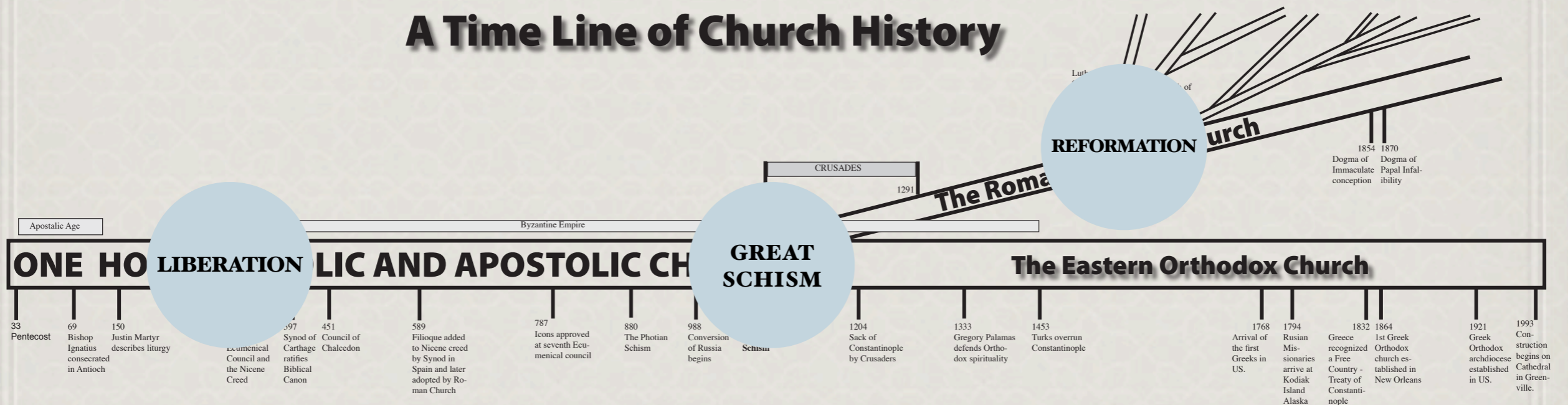
The Gospel of John is concluded with:

*But there are also many other things which Jesus did; were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.*

John 21:25

*Where did this false idea come from?*

## A Time Line of Church History



Began with Martin Luther's Break with the Roman Church over doctrines that were not apostolic. Part of effort to discredit Roman Church Orthodox Church was not a party to this unfortunate split

# Sola Scriptura

- ✦ If you strip away Tradition from Church what do you have?
- ✦ An ideology with a written set of words.
- ✦ Faith is not based on a Book, but on relationship with God.
- ✦ Says anyone can pick up a book and with self-interpretation get everything one needs to be a Christian.
- ✦ For Orthodoxy, Christianity is a way life to be lived in relationship with Christ.
- ✦ We seek union with Christ through Holy Spirit in His Body, the Church.
- ✦ We get help through the sacramental life within the Church
- ✦ For Orthodox, Christianity is not simply a set of doctrines or moral precepts contained in a book.

