

Sources of Christian Doctrine

What does "Sources of Christian Doctrine" mean?

God – Divine Revelation. God is the Lord and has revealed Himself to us.

Holy Tradition (Includes Scripture)

The ongoing life of God's People is called Holy Tradition. St John the Theologian writes, "There are many other things that Jesus did, which, if they were all written down in detail, I do not suppose that the world itself could hold the books that would have to be written" (John 21: 25). But what about those things Jesus said and did that were not recorded for us? These became Holy Tradition, passed on orally from one generation of Christians to another. The Church has been and remains the guardian, the judge, and the touchstone upon which was decided the integrity and genuineness of that which has become known as the Holy Tradition of the Orthodox Church.

Not everything in the Church belongs to its Holy Tradition for not everything in the Church is done by the grace of the Holy Spirit, and not everything in the Church pertains essentially and necessarily to the Kingdom Of God. Some things in the Church are just temporal and temporary things, merely human customs and traditions of no eternal and everlasting value. Such things in themselves are not sinful or wrong. On the contrary, they may be very positive and very helpful to the life of the Church as long as they are not taken to be what they are not. Thus, it is very important in the Church to make the distinction between traditions which are merely earthly and human and passing away and the genuine Holy Tradition which pertains to the heavenly and eternal Kingdom of God. (examples: Christmas Trees...etc)

Among the elements which make up the Holy Tradition of the Church, the Bible holds the first place. Next comes the Church's liturgical life and its prayer, then its dogmatic decisions and the acts of its approved churchly councils, the writings of the church fathers, the lives of the saints, the canon laws, and finally the iconographic tradition together with the other inspired forms of creative artistic expression such as music and architecture.

Bible

At a council of Orthodox bishops in Carthage in 318 (Canon 30) the books which make up what we now call the New Testament were determined. And at the Council of Laodicea in 343 (Canon 59) the books of both the Old and New Testaments were determined.

The Masoretic text was not an accurate rendition of the original Old Testament Scripture. While translating the text into Hebrew the Masoretic scholars omitted several books, including Tobit, Judah, 1 Maccabees, 2 Maccabees, Wisdom of Solomon, Sirach, Baruch, and the Prayer of Manasses. Also, in the Masoretic text, parts of Daniel and Esther were omitted and the Psalms were renumbered (from Psalm 9 to 142 in the Masoretic text, psalms are one number higher).

The Divine Services & Hymnology of the Church

Our prayers and hymns are not cute jingles and pretty poems we sing just for fun...

Councils

Gatherings of bishops as equal brothers in Christ.

It seems good to the Holy Spirit and to us.

Ecumenical

Local

Definitions, Acts, Canons.

Infallibility of the Church, guided by the Holy Spirit. No infallibility of any one single bishop.

The Fathers & Mothers of the Church

Saints, theologians, teachers, spiritual fathers and mothers who defended and explained the Orthodox Christian Faith. Their works are universally received by the Church. Not all their works and sayings are considered official doctrine/teaching. Theologoumena = personal/private opinion, not official teaching or doctrine of the Church.

(The Lives of the) **Saints (Hagiography/Hagiology)**

Iconography/Iconology

Not idolatry (we keep photos of loved ones that we venerate)

Homework: Watch A Beginner's Guide to Orthodox Christianity (Catechetical School of Holy Annunciation Orthodox Church, Brisbane)