

## **LESSON 01: INTRODUCTION AND CHARACTERISTICS OF ORTHODOX CHRISTIANITY**

“But, beyond these sayings, let us look at the very tradition, teaching, and faith of the Catholic Church from the beginning, which the Lord gave, the Apostles preached, and the Fathers safe guarded. Upon this the Church is founded, and he who should fall away from it would not be a Christian, and should no longer be so called.” – St Athanasius (+298), *Ad Serapion* I, 28.

“Moreover, in the Catholic Church itself, all possible care must be taken, that we hold that faith which has been believed everywhere, always, by all [*quod ubique, quod semper, quod ad omnibus creditum est*].” – St. Vincent of Lerins (+450), *Commonitory* ch. II, §6; NPNF 2:11, p. 132.

“Our opinion agrees with the Eucharist, and the Eucharist in turn confirms our opinion.” – St Irenaeus of Lyons (+202), *Against Heresies* IV.18.5.

## **LESSON 02: SOURCES OF THE ORTHODOX FAITH**

“The Church, having received this preaching and this faith, although scattered throughout the whole world, yet, as if occupying but one house, carefully preserves it. She also believes these points [of doctrine] just as if she had but one soul, and one and the same heart, and she proclaims them, and teaches them, and hands them down, with perfect harmony, as if she possessed only one mouth. For, although the languages of the world are dissimilar, yet the import of the tradition is one and the same. ...” (St Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against Heresies*, I.10.2, ANF 1:331).

“Of the beliefs and practices whether generally accepted or publicly enjoined which are preserved in the Church some we possess derived from written teaching; others we have received delivered to us in a mystery by the tradition of the apostles; and both of these in relation to true religion have the same force. And these no one who is even moderately versed in the institutions of the Church will gainsay. For were we to attempt to reject such customs as have no written authority, on the ground that the importance they possess is small, we should unintentionally injure the Gospel in its very vitals; or, rather, should make our public definition a mere phrase and nothing more. For instance, to take the first and most general example, who is thence who has taught us in writing to sign with the sign of the cross those who have trusted in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ? What writing has taught us to turn to the East at the prayer? Which of the saints has left us in writing the words of the invocation at the displaying of the bread of the Eucharist and the cup of blessing? For we are not, as is well known, content with what the apostle or the Gospel has recorded, but both in preface and conclusion we add other words as being of great importance to the validity of the ministry, and these we derive from unwritten teaching. Moreover, we bless the water of baptism and the oil of the chrism, and besides this the catechumen who is being baptized. On what written authority do we do this? Is not our authority silent and mystical tradition? Nay, by what written word is the anointing of oil itself taught? And

whence comes the custom of baptizing thrice? And as to the other customs of baptism from what Scripture do we derive the renunciation of Satan and his angels? Does not this come from that unpublished and unspoken teaching which our fathers guarded in a silence out of the reach of curious meddling and inquisitive investigation? Well had they learnt the lesson that the awful dignity of the mysteries is best preserved by silence. What the uninitiated are not even allowed to look at was hardly likely to be publicly paraded about in written documents. What was the meaning of the mighty Moses in not making all the parts of the tabernacle open to everyone? ... In the same manner, the Apostles and Fathers who laid down laws for the Church from the beginning thus guarded the awful dignity of the mysteries in secrecy and silence, for what is bruited abroad random among the common folk is no mystery at all. This is the reason for our tradition of unwritten precepts and practices, that the knowledge of our dogmas may not become neglected and contemned by the multitude through familiarity. *For dogma* (δόγμα) is one thing, and *kerugma* (κήρυγμα) another; the former is observed in silence; the latter is proclaimed to all the world....” – St. Basil the Great, *On the Holy Spirit*, c. 66 (PG 32:188-89).

### **LESSON 03: CREATION AND THE FALL**

“Believe thou first and foremost that there is one God who created and arranged all things and brought them out of non-existence into being” (*Shepherd of Hermas*, II.1).

“From it [the Christian Faith] we know that, because there is Mind behind the universe, it did not originate itself; because God is infinite, not finite, it was not made from pre-existent matter, but out of nothing and out of non-existence absolute and utter God brought it into being through the Word” (St Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, 3).

Prayer at Holy God (Liturgy of St John Chrysostom): “O Holy God... who out of nothingness hast brought all things into being...”

“With great gladness let us accept the proclamation of the Fast: for if Adam our forefather had fasted, we should not have suffered banishment from Eden. The fruit that brought death upon me was pleasant to the eyes and good for food. Then let us not be taken prisoner by our eyes; let not our tongue delight in costly foods, for once they have been eaten they are worthless. Let us shun all greed: then we shall not become slaves to the passions which follow an excess of food and drink. Let us sign ourselves with the blood of Him who for our sakes willingly was led to death, and the destroying angel will not touch us [cf. connection between blood on door-posts and blood of Christ], and may we eat the Holy Passover of Christ for the salvation of our souls.” (*Lenten Triodion*, Orthros, 1st Friday, p. 272).

### **LESSON 04: JESUS CHRIST, THE INCARNATE WORD**

“Thus the mystery of the Lord prefigured from of old through the vision of a type ... Thus, if you wish to see the Lord, look at Abel who likewise was slain, at Isaac who was tied up, Joseph who was betrayed, David who was hunted down, the prophets who suffered for the sake of Christ...” – Melito of Sardis, *On the Pascha*, P58-9.

“He who hung the earth is hanging. He who fixed the heavens in place has been fixed in place. He who laid the foundations of the universe has been laid on a tree.” – Melito of Sardis, *On the Pascha*, P96.

“He made all things out of nothing through His own Word, our Lord Jesus Christ” – St Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, 3.

“... for the first fact that you must grasp is this: the renewal of creation has been wrought by the self-same Word who made it in the beginning.” – St Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, 1.1.

“But how could we be joined to incorruptibility and immortality, unless, first, incorruptibility and immortality had become that which we also are...?” – St Irenaeus of Lyon, *Against Heresies*, 3.19.1.

“God became man, so that man might become god [lit., He became a human being, so that we might be deified]” – St Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, c. 54.

The Chalcedonian Definition: “Following, therefore, the holy fathers, we all in harmony teach confession of one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ; the same one perfect in Godhead and the same one perfect in manhood; the same one truly God and truly man, of a rational soul and body; the same one consubstantial with the Father in respect of the Godhead, and consubstantial with us in respect of the manhood, like us in all things apart from sin; the same one begotten from the Father before the ages in respect of the Godhead, and in the last days for us and for our salvation from the Virgin Mary the Theotokos in respect of the manhood; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, acknowledged in two natures; without confusion, change, division, or separation, the difference of the natures being in no way destroyed by the union, but rather the distinctive character of each nature being preserved and coming together into one person and one hypostasis, not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son, Only-begotten, God, Word, Lord, Jesus Christ, even as the prophets from of old and Jesus Christ himself taught us about him and the Creed of the fathers has handed down to us...”

## **LESSON 05: JESUS CHRIST OUR REDEEMER**

“And unless humanity had been joined to God, he could never have become a partaker of incorruptibility ... On what basis could we be sharers in adoption as God’s sons? We had to receive, through the Son’s agency, that participation in Him. The Word, having been made flesh, had to share Himself with us. Wherefore also He passed through every stage of life, restoring to all communion with God” (St Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against*

Heresies, 3.18.7).

“...perhaps He goes to sleep, that He might bless sleep also; perhaps He is tired, that He might hallow weariness also; perhaps He weeps, that He might make tears blessed.” (St Gregory Nazianzus, Or. 37.2)

On the fact that the Word of God assumed all of human nature, including a rational soul (nous): “Whoever has set his hope on a human being without mind is actually mindless himself and unworthy of being saved in his entirety. What is not assumed is not healed but that which is united to the Godhead is saved” (St Gregory the Theologian, *Letter 101 to Cledonius* (ET Wickham, *On God and Christ* p. 158).

## LESSON 06 - THE HOLY TRINITY

“God the Father, uncreated, immaterial, invisible; one God, the Creator of all things: this is the **first point** of our faith. The **second point** is this: the Word of God, Son of God, Christ Jesus our Lord, Who was manifested to the prophets according to the form of their prophesying and according to the method of the dispensation of the Father. Is He through Whom (i.e. the Word) all things were made; Who also at the end of the times, to complete and gather up all things, was made man among men, visible and tangible, in order to abolish death and show forth life and produce a community of union between God and man. And the **third point** is: the Holy Spirit, through Whom the prophets prophesied, and the Fathers learned the things of God, and the righteous were led into the way of righteousness; and Who in the end of the times was poured out in a new way upon mankind in all the earth, renewing man unto God” (St Irenaeus of Lyons, *Epideixis*, c. 6; ET Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, pp. 77- 8).

“God is one because there is one Divinity: unoriginate, simple, beyond being, without parts, indivisible. **The Divinity is both unity and trinity – wholly one and wholly three.** It is wholly one in respect of the essence, wholly three in respect of the hypostases or person. For the Divinity is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and is in Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The whole Divinity is in the whole Father and the whole Father is in the whole Divinity...[he modifies and repeats the formula for Son and Spirit] ... For, the whole Father is completely in the whole Son and Spirit ... Therefore, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are one God.” (St Maximus the Confessor, *Two Hundred Texts on Theology and the Incarnation*, 2, c. 1, ET *Philokalia* v. 2, 137-8).

## LESSON 7 - THE HOLY SPIRIT, THE CHURCH, AND THE EVER-VIRGIN MARY

“The Church is called catholic because she extends throughout the whole universe, to

the very limits of the earth, and because she teaches all the doctrines, leaving nothing out... she treats and heals every sort of sin 'in a catholic manner' (καθολικῶς) and every virtue is found in her" – St Cyril of Jerusalem, *18th Baptismal Catechesis*, 23.

"In a word, what the soul is to the body, Christians are to the world. The soul is dispersed through all the members of the body, and Christians throughout the cities of the world. The soul dwells in the body, but is not of the body, likewise Christians dwell in the world, but are not of the world...Such is the important position to which God has appointed them, and it is not right for them to decline it" – Epistle to Diognetus.

"For where the Church is, there is the Spirit of God, and where the Spirit of God is, there is the Church and all grace" – St Irenaeus of Lyon, *Against Heresies*, 3.24.1.

"Whoever does not confess the Holy Mary as the Mother of God is cut off from the Godhead. Whoever says that He [the Word of God] was channeled, as it were through the Virgin but not formed within her ... is likewise godless [ἄθεος]. Whoever says the human being was formed and then God put him on to wear him is condemned: this is not God's birth but the avoidance of birth" (St Gregory the Theologian, *Ep. 101 to Cledonius*).

"Whoever does not acknowledge Emmanuel to be truly God, and hence the holy Virgin, Theotokos (for she gave fleshly birth to the Word of God made flesh), let him be anathema" (St Cyril of Alexandria, *3rd Letter to Nestorius*)

"This name [Theotokos] contains the whole mystery of the Incarnation" (St John Damascene, *De Fide Orth.* III.12)

"She is the cause of what came before her, the champion of what came after her and the agent of things eternal. She is the substance of the prophets, the principle of the apostles, the She is the substance of the prophets, the principle of the apostles, the firm foundation of the martyrs and the premise of the teachers of the Church. She is the glory of those upon earth, the joy of celestial beings, the adornment of all creation. She is the beginning and the source and root of unutterable good things; she is the summit and consummation of everything holy" (St Gregory Palamas, *On the Dormition*).

## **LESSON 8 - THE HOLY MYSTERIES AND THE SPIRITUAL LIFE IN CHRIST**

"Great is the Baptism that lies before you: a ransom to captives; a remission of offenses; a death of sin; a new-birth of the soul; a garment of light; a holy indissoluble seal; a chariot to heaven; the delight of Paradise; a welcome into the kingdom; the gift of adoption!" – St Cyril of Jerusalem, *Procatechesis*, 16.

"... ye are figures of Christ. He also bathed Himself in the rive Jordan, and having imparted of the fragrance of His Godhead to the waters, He came up from them and the Holy Spirit in substance lighted on Him, like resting upon like. In the same manner to

you also, after you had come up from the pool of the sacred streams, were given the Unction, the sign of that wherewith Christ was anointed, and this is the Holy Spirit” – St Cyril of Jerusalem, *On the Holy Chrism*, 2.

“Since He Himself has declared and said of the Bread, ‘This is My body,’ who shall dare to doubt any longer? And since He has affirmed and said, ‘This is My blood,’ who shall ever hesitate, saying, that this is not His blood?” – St Cyril of Jerusalem, *On the Eucharistic Food*, 1.

The “Lord... by inaugurating for human nature a birth unchanged by the contrary realities of pleasure and pain... [and] having given our human nature impassibility through his Passion, remission through his toils, and eternal life through his death, he restored that nature again, renewing the habitudes of human nature... and granting to human nature... the supernatural grace of deification... God became a man and provided another beginning, a second genesis for human nature” (St Maximus the Confessor, *Ad Thallasium* 61).

“We shall become that which in no way results from our natural ability, since our human nature has no faculty for grasping what transcends nature. For nothing created is by nature capable of inducing deification... Grace alone... elevates our nature above its proper limits in excess of glory” (St Maximus the Confessor, *Ad Thallasium* 22).

## **LESSON 9 - PRAYER, FASTING, ALMSGIVING & THE SANCTIFICATION OF TIME**

“Would you see His altar also? ... This altar is composed of the very members of Christ, and the body of the Lord becomes an altar. This altar is more venerable even than the one which we now use [in church]. For this one is ... but a stone by nature, though it becomes holy because it receives Christ’s Body. But that altar is holy because it is itself Christ’s body ... which you may see lying everywhere, in the alleys and in the market places. On it you may sacrifice any time ... when you see a poor believer, believe that you are beholding an altar. When you see this one as a beggar, do not only refrain from insulting him, but rather give him honor.” – St John Chrysostom, Homily 20 on 2 Corinthians (10:15).

“There are three powers of the soul – the noetic [understanding], the excitable, and the desiring. By the noetic power we seek to understand what is good; by the desiring power we desire the good we have understood; by the excitable power we strive and fight for it.” Saint Maximus the Confessor

“Abba Lot went to see Abba Joseph and said to him, ‘Abba as far as I can I say my little office, I fast a little, I pray and meditate, I live in peace, and, as far as I can, I purify my thoughts. What else can I do?’ Then the old man stood up and stretched his hands towards heaven. His fingers became like ten lamps of fire and he said to him, ‘If you will, you can become all flame.’” – Sayings of the Desert Fathers

“Communion, then, is God’s union with us, our deification, sanctification, fullness of

grace, enlightenment, prevention of everything against us, and granting of every good. What else is both a commingling and communion with God? This is the mystery of mysteries, the sanctification of saints, truly the holy of holies, the rite of all rites, both the beginning author and final completion of the rites. Since the originator of the rite, the Word, alone established it and passed it on, He Himself is the rite; and in order that He remain with us, He has passed it on.” – St Symeon of Thessalonika, *On the Sacred Liturgy*, c. 6.

## **LESSON 10 - HOLY SPACE, HOLY PEOPLE**

“Christ, the Lord’s sheep is sacrificed; when you hear the words, “Let us pray” when you behold the curtains drawn up, then imagine that the Heavens are let down from above, and that the Angels are descending!” – St John Chrysostom, Homily 3 in Ephesians (NPNF 1.13, p. 64)

For this holy altar, too, by which I stand, is stone, ordinary in its nature, nowise different from the other slabs of stone that build our houses and adorn our pavements; but seeing that it was consecrated to the service of God, and received the benediction, it is a holy table, an altar undefiled, no longer touched by the hands of all, but of the priests alone, and that with reverence. – St Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Baptism of Christ* (NPNF 2.05, p. 175).

“For he entered the Church attended by the whole of his train; it was the festival of the Epiphany, and the Church was crowded, and, by taking his place among the people, he made a profession of unity. ... Upon his entrance he was struck by the thundering roll of the Psalms, by the sea of heads of the congregation, and by the angelic rather than human order which pervaded the sanctuary and its precincts...” – St Gregory the Theologian (describing the Emperor Valens entering the church of St Basil), *Funeral Oration for St Basil the Great*, c. 52.

“How the Creator and Provider of all has honored and adorned our nature! The saints shine with His light; they are hallowed by His grace, having conquered sin and washed away every impurity of body and spirit; they are glorious with His glory; they are incorruptible through His incorruption. Glory to God, Who has so honored, enlightened, and exalted our nature.” – St. John of Kronstadt, *The Spiritual Counsels*.

“Though the soul is not present, a power resides in the bodies of the saints because of the righteous soul which has for many years dwelt in it, or used it as its minister” (St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lectures*, XVIII, 16).