

The Story of the Bible



Catechism Class
October 16, 2024

“Scripture in Tradition”

“Scripture took shape within the matrix of ancient Church tradition. Rather than seeing the two as either complementary or mutually exclusive, we need to consider them from the perspective of their historical development. Tradition has been aptly described as the life of the Holy Spirit within the Church, the presence of the divine, sanctifying Life within the Body of believers. It may be likened to a great river, whose main current is Scripture. Scripture is the normative or ‘canonical’ witness that serves as the touchstone by which all traditions are measured and all authentic Tradition is discerned. Orthodoxy sees the relationship between the two in a way that can be described not as Scripture *or* Tradition, or Scripture *and* Tradition, but Scripture *in* Tradition. This is because Scripture *is* Tradition, in the sense that the New Testament writings are a part of Tradition and constitute its normative element. Those writings came forth from the Church’s life and proclamation, and they have continued through the ages to be the measure, rule or ‘canon’ of Christian faith.”

Scripture in Tradition: The Bible and Its Interpretation in the Orthodox Church Fr. John Breck

Tradition in Scripture

“But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God chose you from the beginning to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth. To this he called you through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by letter.” 2 Thessalonians 2:13-15

“Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from any brother who is living in idleness and not in accord with tradition that you received from us.” 2 Thessalonians 3:6

“I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions even as I have delivered them to you.” 1 Corinthians 11:2

The Importance of Passing Down Tradition

“You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and what you have heard from me before many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.”
2 Timothy 2:1

Papias (c. 70-120)

“But I shall not be unwilling to put down, along with my interpretations, whatsoever instructions I received with care at any time from the elders, and stored up with care in my memory, assuring you at the same time of their truth. For I did not, like the multitude, take pleasure in those who spoke much, but in those who taught the truth; nor in those who related strange commandments, but in those who rehearsed the commandments given by the Lord to faith, and proceeding from truth itself. If, then, any one who had attended on the elders came, I asked minutely after their sayings,—what Andrew or Peter said, or what was said by Philip, or by Thomas, or by James, or by John, or by Matthew, or by any other of the Lord's disciples: which things Aristion and the presbyter John, the disciples of the Lord, say. For I imagined that what was to be got from books was not so profitable to me as what came from the living and abiding voice.”

The Importance of Passing down Tradition - The “Rule of Faith”

St. Irenaeus (c. AD 189)

“As I said before, the Church, having received this preaching and this faith, although she is disseminated throughout the whole world, yet guarded it, as if she occupied but one house. She likewise believes these things just as if she had but one soul and one and the same heart; and harmoniously she proclaims them and teaches them and hands them down, as if she possessed but one mouth. For, while the languages of the world are diverse, nevertheless, the authority of the tradition is one and the same.”
(Against Heresies 1:10:2)

“That is why it is surely necessary to avoid them [heretics], while cherishing with the utmost diligence the things pertaining to the Church, and to lay hold of the tradition of truth...What if the apostles had not in fact left writings to us? Would it not be necessary to follow the order of tradition, which was handed down to those to whom they entrusted the churches?” (ibid., 3:4:1)

St. Basil the Great (A.D. 375)

“Of the dogmas and messages preserved in the Church, some we possess from written teaching and others we receive from the tradition of the apostles, handed on to us in mystery. In respect to piety, both are of the same force. No one will contradict any of these, no one, at any rate, who is even moderately versed in matters ecclesiastical. Indeed, were we to try to reject unwritten customs as having no great authority, we would unwittingly injure the gospel in its vitals; or rather, we would reduce [the Christian] message to a mere term.” (*The Holy Spirit* 27:66)

St. Athanasius (A.D. 367)

“There are, then, of the Old Testament, twenty-two books in number; for, as I have heard, it is handed down that this is the number of the letters among the Hebrews; their respective order and names being as follows. The first is Genesis, then Exodus, next Leviticus, after that Numbers, and then Deuteronomy. Following these there is Joshua, the son of Nun, then Judges, then Ruth. And again, after these four books of Kings, the first and second being reckoned as one book, and so likewise the third and fourth as one book. And again, the first and second of the Chronicles are reckoned as one book. Again Ezra, the first and second are similarly one book. After these there is the book of Psalms, then the Proverbs, next Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs. Job follows, then the Prophets, the twelve being reckoned as one book. Then Isaiah, one book, then Jeremiah with Baruch, Lamentations, and the epistle, one book; afterwards, Ezekiel and Daniel, each one book. Thus far constitutes the Old Testament.”

“Again it is not tedious to speak of the [books] of the New Testament. These are, the four Gospels, according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Afterwards, the Acts of the Apostles and Epistles (called Catholic), seven, viz. of James, one; of Peter, two; of John, three; after these, one of Jude. In addition, there are fourteen Epistles of Paul, written in this order. The first, to the Romans; then two to the Corinthians; after these, to the Galatians; next, to the Ephesians; then to the Philippians; then to the Colossians; after these, two to the Thessalonians, and that to the Hebrews; and again, two to Timothy; one to Titus; and lastly, that to Philemon. And besides, the Revelation of John.”

St. Athanasius continued

“But for greater exactness I add this also, writing of necessity; that there are other books besides these not indeed included in the Canon, but appointed by the Fathers to be read by those who newly join us, and who wish for instruction in the word of godliness. The Wisdom of Solomon, and the Wisdom of Sirach, and Esther, and Judith, and Tobit, and that which is called the Teaching of the Apostles, and the Shepherd. But the former, my brethren, are included in the Canon, the latter being [merely] read; nor is there in any place a mention of apocryphal writings. But they are an invention of heretics, who write them when they choose, bestowing upon them their approbation, and assigning to them a date, that so, using them as ancient writings, they may find occasion to lead astray the simple.”

The Story of Scripture - St. Ignatius of Antioch

St. Ignatius of Antioch - *Letter to the Philadelphians* 8:2 -9:2

“Moreover, I urge you to do nothing in a spirit of contentiousness, but in accordance with the teaching of Christ. For I heard some people say, ‘If I do not find it in the archives, I do not believe it in the gospel.’ And when I said to them, ‘It is written,’ they answered me, ‘That is precisely the question.’ But for me, the ‘archives’ are Jesus Christ, the unalterable archives are his cross and death and his resurrection and the faith that comes through him; by these things I want, through your prayers, to be justified.

The priests, too, were good, but the high priest, entrusted with the Holy of Holies, is better; he alone has been entrusted with the hidden things of God, for he himself is the door of the Father, through which Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and the prophets and the apostles and the church enter in. All these come together in the unity of God. But the gospel possesses something distinctive, namely, the coming of the Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ, his suffering, and the resurrection. For the beloved prophets preached in anticipation of him, but the gospel is the imperishable finished work. All these things together are good, if you believe with love.”

The Story of Scripture - St. Justin Martyr

St. Justin the Martyr and Philosopher - *First Apology* 31:7

“In these books, then, of the prophets, we found Jesus our Christ foretold as coming, born of a virgin, growing up to man’s estate, and healing every disease and every sickness and raising the dead, and being hated and unrecognized, and crucified and dying, and rising again and ascending into heaven, and being and being-called the Son of God, and certain persons being sent by Him to every race of men proclaiming these things, and men from among the Gentiles, rather [than the Jews], believing in Him.”

The Story Told in Scripture

Chiasmus

A rhetorical device in which the end is a reflection of the beginning and it all revolves around the middle.

The Chiastic Structure of the Scriptures

Creation \Rightarrow Incarnation \Rightarrow Eschaton

Other Examples of Chiasmus in Scripture

The Synoptic Gospels

The Chiastic Center - Peter's Confession

"Who do you say that I am?"

Luke as an example of Chiasmus in the Synoptic Gospels and how it is depicted in our hymnology and iconography.

The Gospel of John

The Chiastic Center - The Raising of Lazarus

"I am the Resurrection and the Life. Do you believe this?"