

Back to Basics with the *Law of God* Part 8: Christian Faith & Life (b)



A Straightforward Teaching of Orthodox Christianity based upon
the Slobodskoy *Law of God* Study Book

Priest Justin Patterson / Continuing into January 2019

What is the Law of God?

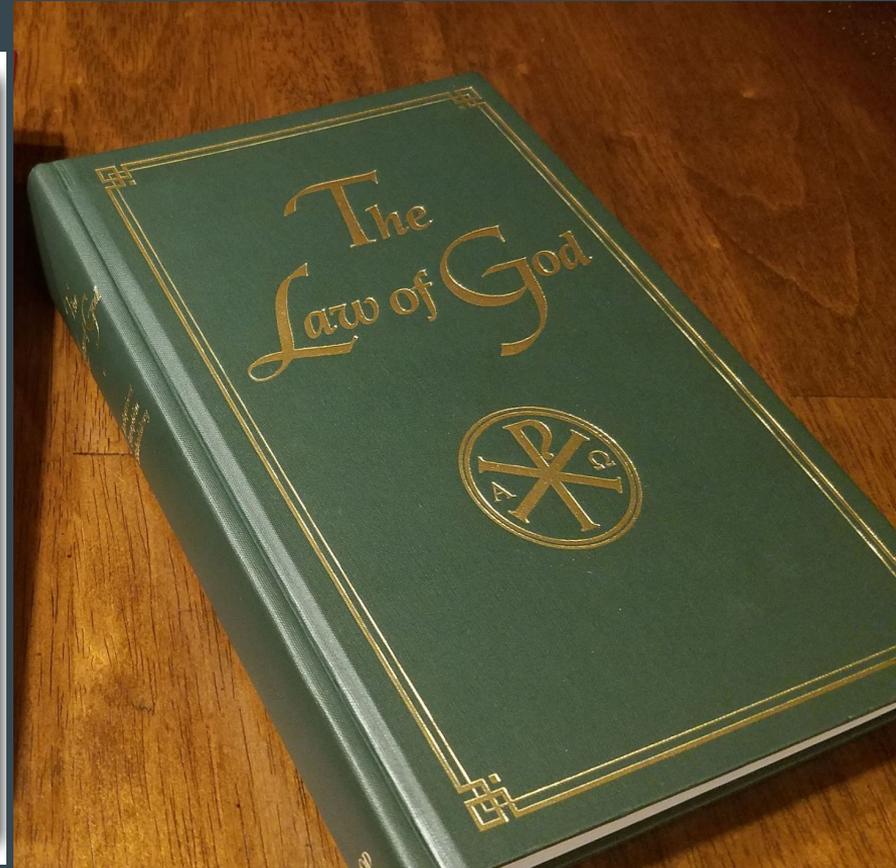
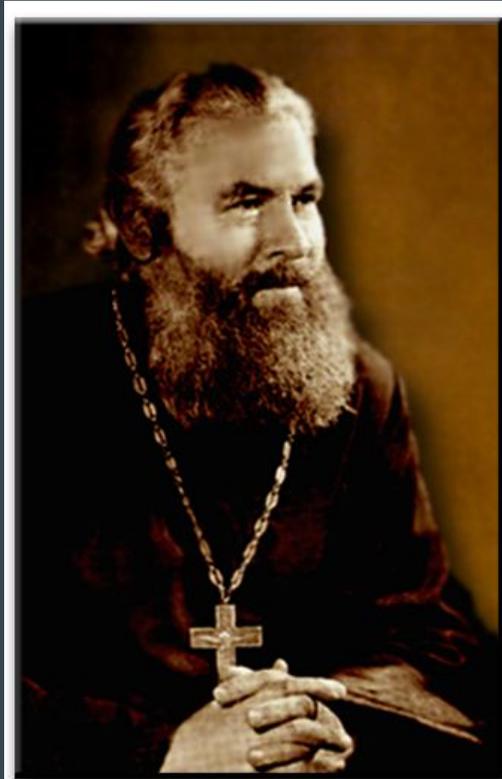
The Law of God

“For Study at Home
and at School”

Compiled by
Archpriest Seraphim
Slobodskoy 1912-71

Holy Trinity Press in
Jordanville

1966; English 1993



Weeks 1 & 2: Introduction & Broad Topic of Prayer

+Physicality in Prayer (sign, posture, standing)

+3 broad categories of prayer:

1. Prayers of Praise & Thanksgiving
2. Prayers of Petition
3. Penitential Prayers

+Disposition in Prayer (peace, focus, fasting, purity)

+Tools for Prayers (Akathists, Prayer Books, Special Services of Need, and more)

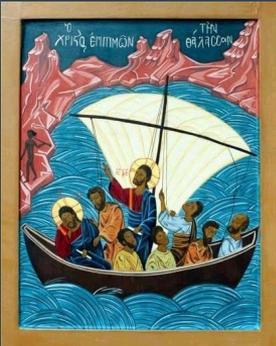


Weeks 3 & 4: The Gospel in the Old Testament

- +Intro to the Old Testament
- +Days of Creation & Making of Man
- +The Fall, Sin, Cain & Abel
- +The Flood
- +Vital Vignettes from the Old Testament
Especially CHRIST in the OT!



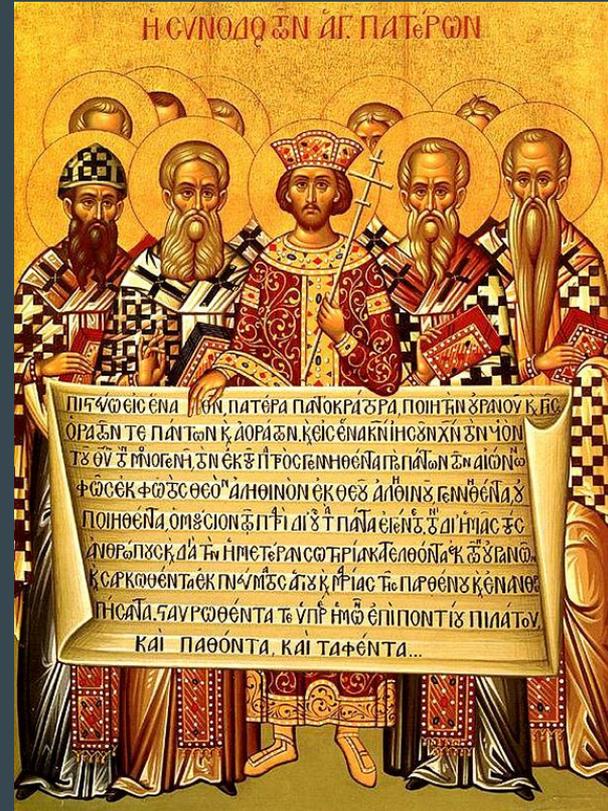
Weeks 5 & 6: The Gospel in the New Testament, Parts 1 & 2



Week 7: We started our current section “Christian Life & Faith”

We got through 3 of 8 chapters:

1. Purpose of Man
2. Supernatural Revelation: Tradition & Scripture (including discuss of the Canon of Scripture)
3. Short Summaries of the Ecumenical Councils



In Week 7 we began with Question “The Purpose of Man?”

God gave mankind:

- Intelligence
- Free will
- Immortal Soul

Deep Meaning to life resides in this:

- To know God
- To become like God (perfect/whole)
- To inherit full and blessed life in God

Necessity: to **believe** and to **live that faith**

We explored both **Divine Revelation** & **Natural Revelation**



“Natural Revelation”

What is natural revelation?

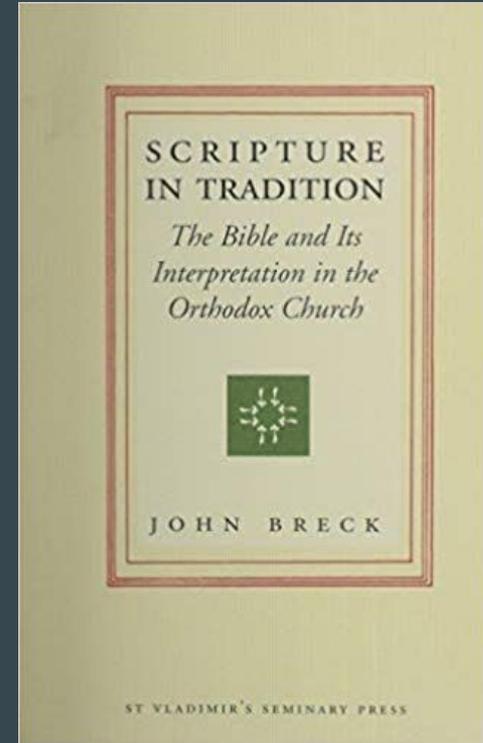
- When God reveals himself to us through nature (natural means)
- When God speaks to us through our human conscience
- When God speaks to us through human history and stories
 - E.g., story of the Flood, Sodom and Gomorrah, Hebrew nation’s sins and calamities that followed



Divine Revelation--Tradition & Scripture

Fr. Hopko famously noted that within the Holy Tradition we find a number of vital parts:

1. Scripture
2. The Councils & their Canons (Canonical Tradition)
3. The Liturgy (Worship Tradition of the Church)
4. The Fathers (their Lives and their Writings)
5. The Art of the Church



Then (in Week 7) We Discussed the Ecumenical Councils

Can you list them from last time we met?



Tonight (Week 8) we finish “Christian Faith & Life”

4. *The Christian Faith (esp. the Creed)*

5. *The Christian Life*

6. *The Commandments*

7. *The Beatitude*

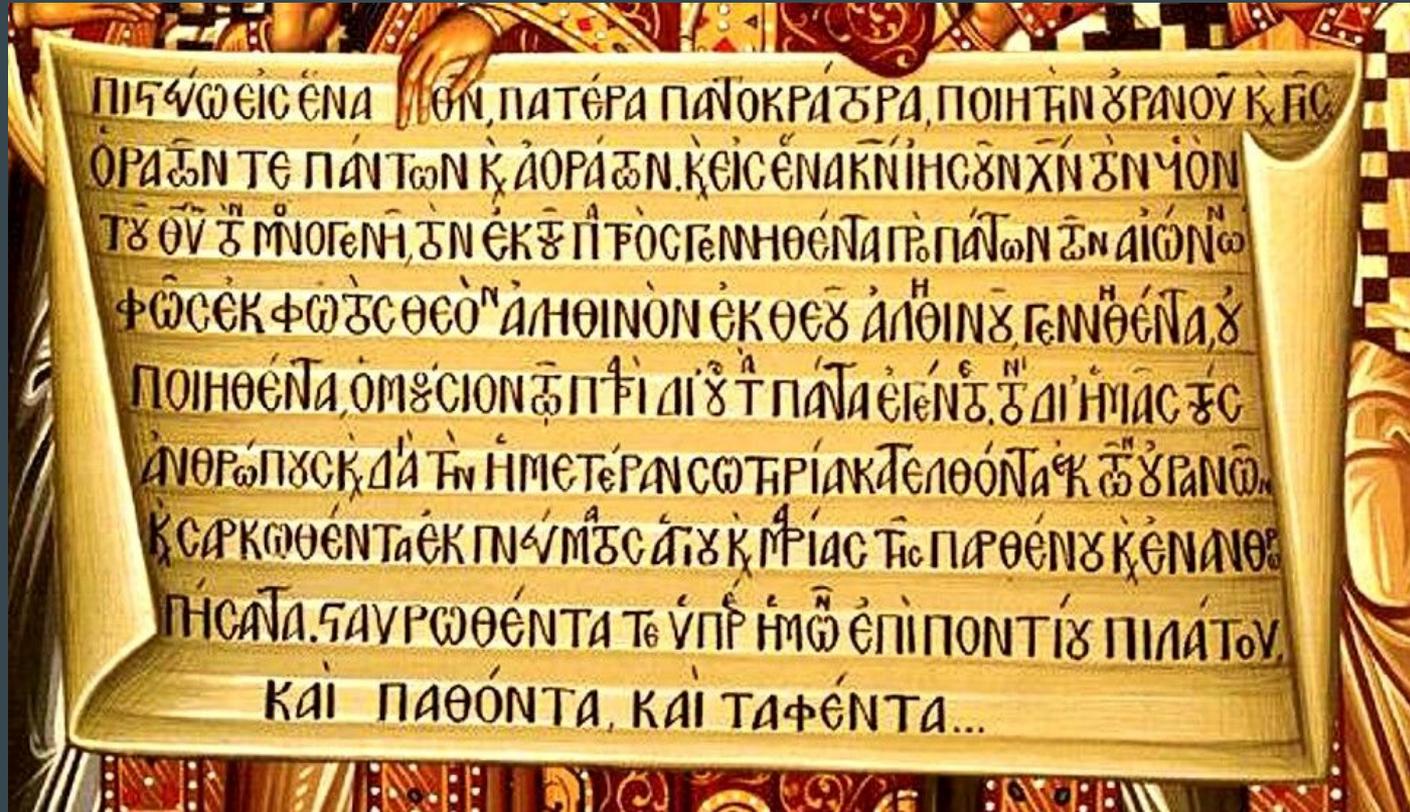
8. *Contemporary Teachings & Faith in God*



Chapter 4: The Christian Faith (The Symbol of Faith/Creed)

Fr. Seraphim:

“The Creed is a concise summary of all the truths of Christian Faith... Whoever does not accept these truths is not an Orthodox Christian.”



12 “Articles” of the Creed...

Символ веры

¹Вѣрую во еди́наго Бо́га Отца́, Все-
держителя, Творца́ не́бу и землі, види-
мым же всем и невидимым. ²И во еди́на-
го Го́спода Иису́са Христа́, Сы́на Бо́жия,
Единоро́днаго, И́же от Отца́ ро́ждённа-
го прѣжде всех век; Свѣта от Свѣта, Бо́-
га исти́нна от Бо́га исти́нна, ро́ждённа,
несотворѣнна, е́диносущна Отцу́, Имже
вся бѣ́ша. ³Нас ра́ди челове́к и на́шего
ра́ди спасѣ́ния сше́дшаго с небѣс, и во-
плотившагося от Ду́ха Свя́та и Мари́и
Дѣвы, и вочеловѣчшася. ⁴Распя́таго же за
ны́ при Понтийстем Пилáте, и страда́вша,
и погребѣ́нна. ⁵И воскрѣсшаго в трѣ́тій
день по Писáнием. ⁶И возше́дшаго на не-
беса́, и седя́ща одесну́ю Отца́. ⁷И па́ки
гряду́щаго со сла́вою суди́ти живым и
мѣртвым, Его́же Цáрствию не бѣ́дет кон-
ца́. ⁸И в Ду́ха Свята́го, Го́спода, Живо-
творящаго, И́же от Отца́ исходя́щаго,
И́же со Отце́м и Сы́ном спокланя́ема и
ссла́вима, глаго́лавшаго проро́ки. ⁹Во
еди́ну Святу́ю, Соборну́ю и Апосто́ль-
скую Це́рковь. ¹⁰Испове́дую еди́но кре-
ще́ние во оставле́ние грехо́в. ¹¹Чаю́ вос-
кресе́ния мѣртвых, ¹²и жи́зни бѣ́дущаго
вѣка. Аминь.

Article 1: I believe...

... in one God the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and of earth, and of all things visible and invisible.”

Key points:

- Faith must be confessed (see Romans 10:10) openly and with boldness
- God is the highest Being (called in biblical language: living, self-existent, “One who is,” everlasting, unchanging, omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent, wise, all-good, righteous...)
- God is “one” but not “solitary”
- *[read the paragraph about trinitarian unity being revealed in nature, p. 433]*
- Angels (and even the fallen angels) are made by God

Article 2: ...and in one Lord Jesus Christ...

...the Son of God, the Only-Begotten, begotten of the Father before all ages. Light of Light. True God of True God. Begotten, not made, of one essence with the Father, by whom all things were made.”

Key points:

- Jesus Christ is uniquely God’s Son (not like angels or men) without beginning
- Jesus Christ shares in the godhead of the Father (hence “My Father and I are one”) but shares humanity with us (hence “My Father is greater than I.”)
- Christ as Logos is he through whom the Father makes all things.
- Christ is Son of God, “the Anointed One,” the King, and the High Priest
- *[read thoughts on Christ’s eternity, pp. 436]*

Article 3: Who for us men and our salvation...

... came down from heaven, and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin, and became man.”

Key points:

- The Son of God became incarnate to fight sin (as God) in the flesh (as man)
- The mentioning of the Spirit and Virgin signify the joining together in union
- *[read some of the prophecies from the OT, p. 438]*
- Fr. Seraphim discusses miracles at length. The basis for miracles, in a sense, is God breaking into the world (supremely made manifest in this union between the Spirit and the Virgin Mary).

Article 4: And was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate...

... and suffered and was buried.”

Key points:

- He “really” suffered, died, and was buried (not Docetic!)
- He also descended to Hades to proclaim liberty to captives there.
- *[read paragraph in center of p. 444]*
- Fr. Seraphim notes that the Cross is the great sign of God’s Love: it is supremely wide, long, high, deep... “Without Cross, we are not Christians.”
- Fr. Seraphim: there exist two providential acts or phenomena that testify to this article: a. The darkness when Christ died and b. The Holy Fire in Jerusalem

Article 5: And He rose again on the third day...

... according to the Scriptures.”

Key points:

- Having truly died, Christ then truly rose, having one spent all of Saturday in the Tomb (so that he rises “on the third day.”)
- “By death, the Lord conquered death, and to all in the graves... He gave life.”
- Fr. Seraphim then refutes two ancient objections to the Resurrection like the “the apostles stole his body” story and the “it was an apparition story.”
- Fr. Seraphim notes that modern objections also arise. *[Read p. 462-463]*

Article 6: And ascended into heaven, and sits at the right...

... hand of the Father.”

Key points:

- Ascension is bodily
- Christ, fully God and fully glorified Man, now sits at the right hand.
- “By his Ascension, our Lord Jesus Christ united earth and heaven and glorified our human nature, raising it to the throne of God...”



Article 7: And he shall come again with glory to judge...

... the living and the dead, whose Kingdom shall have no end.”

Key points:

- 2nd Coming: a real thing!
- It will not be like 1st Coming!
- It will involve judgment
- The timing is unknown to us
- But Gospel will be preached
- And many Jews come to XC
- Yet more corruption, etc....
- AntiChrist will appear then end



Article 8: And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of Life...

...who proceeds from the Father, who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets.”

Key points:

- The terms “Lord” and “processions” and being “worshipped and glorified” with the Father and Son denote the consubstantiality of Spirit within the Trinity
- The Spirit “proceeds” from the Father as Scripture says (John 15:26)
- The Spirit speaks by the prophets (inspiring Scriptures)
- We would add the Spirit spoke through the Apostles and in the Church up till now! Manifestly present in the Sacraments (Mysteries) of the Church.
- What is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit? *[read. 468]*

Article 9: In one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church

Key points:

- “I will build my Church, and the gates of hades will not prevail... (Matt. 28)
- Church is “pillar & ground of truth” (I Tim. 3:15)
- Marks of Church include
 - One: spiritual unity having one Head (XC)
 - Holy: it is in Christ. “The sanctity of the Church is not violated by Christians when they sin because they can always cleanse themselves through the Mystery of Repentance. If someone remains unrepentant, they he visibly or invisible withdraws himself from the Church.
 - Catholic: unity transcending place, people, time
 - Apostolic: apostolic founding, teaching, succession



Article 10: I confess one Baptism for the remission of sins.

Key point:

- This article is not restrained to “Baptism” alone, but implies all of the holy Mysteries, which would certainly include Chrismation, Communion, Confession, Unction, Marriage, and Ordination. Baptism is mentioned because it is the doorway to all the other Sacraments.
- Note: only ONE BAPTISM may ever be performed on a person!



The Mystery of Baptism

Read whole section!



Mystery of Chrismation

Read the whole section. But note the actual words of the Sacrament's application: "the seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit!"



Mystery of Confession

Read the full section.



Mystery of Communion



Mystery of Marriage



Mystery of Ordination





Mystery of Unction



Other Sacraments?



Article 11: I look for the Resurrection of the Dead.

Key points:

- Resurrection occurs at the time of the Second Coming. “At that time, the bodies of the dead will be united with their souls...” (Dry Bones vision of Ezekiel)
- Additional point: we pray for the living and the dead up until this General Resurrection
- An icon of the General Resurrection is the image of a seed dying, then sprouting again to new life



Article 12: And the life of the world to come. Amen.

Key points:

- Eternal life is something to be looked forward to!
- Eternal life will be something joyful and blessed
- Eternal life will be characterized as union with God!
- For those who have not made themselves ready (the “unrepentant and unbelievers”) life in the future age will be “one of torment.” (Matt. 25: 41-46)
- What is “unquenchable fire?” Fr. Seraphim: “The Word of God does not define it, but it uses [the term] to portray the inexplicable, inexpressible torment of hell.”
- The Creed ends with “Amen” to show that what is put forth is invariably true.

In Week 9 (next week):

- Christian Life
- The 10 Commandments
- The Beatitudes of the Savior
- Contemporary Teaching & Faith in God

In Week 10: we explore the liturgical framework of Orthodoxy (including vestments and basic service books)

In Weeks 11 and 12 (respectively) we will carefully examine Vigil & Liturgy

