

Introduction to Orthodoxy Series: Fall 2016

Handout for Part 6: Scripture in Tradition

Basic Beliefs Orthodox Hold Concerning Scripture

1. We read the Scriptures with obedience
2. The Scriptures “belong” to the Church
3. Scripture is the “crown” within Holy Tradition
4. We read the Scriptures through the prism of Christ
5. The Scriptures are the “word of God” only in a secondary sense, inasmuch as they reflect the Word of God, Jesus Christ himself
6. The Scriptures are *iconic* rather than *historical*.

Nine Basic Principles of an

Orthodox Exegetical Method for the Scriptures

(Adapted from Dr. Mary Ford, St. Tikhon’s Seminary)

Principle 1: God is real and has become Incarnate in Jesus Christ revealing himself to us in the person of Christ, in the Scriptures about Christ, and in various ways in and through the Church.

Principle 2: Our capacity for interpreting the Scripture depends upon our spiritual state.

Principle 3: We must commit to be obedient to the Scriptures if we are to fully understand them. The most important aspects of the Scriptures can only be comprehended by living them.

Principle 4: The ultimate purpose of interpreting Scripture is the same as the ultimate purpose of the Christian life: to become like God (*theosis*) through real communion with him.

Principle 5: Scripture can only be interpreted fully and correctly within the community of the Church and her Tradition.

Principle 6: While Scripture is a witness to the Truth, it does not necessarily contain everything necessary to comprehending that Truth.

- The Bible is **not** a “handbook” for operating everything in the Church

Principle 7: We work with the received text primarily, giving that received text preference over conjectural or reconstructed texts. What has been preserved in and by the Church is given first place as we interpret the Scriptures.

Principle 8: We must have humility before the text of Scripture.

Principle 9: Secondary (academic) knowledge has its place in interpreting Scripture.

(A Final and Personal Principle: The Scriptures, to profit my soul, must become personal.)

Additional Resources:

Ancient Faith Radio offering quality podcasts on the Orthodox Christian Faith, its history, its worship, and its interpretation of Scripture, can be found at www.ancientfaith.com

The Orthodox Church in America offers a wonderful introduction to Orthodox Christianity called the Orthodox Faith. It can be accessed through the OCA website at www.oca.org

St. Athanasius Orthodox Church and Fr. Justin Patterson can be reached via the web at www.athanasiusoca.org We also have a Facebook Page that is regularly updated.