

Chapter 1 : Christian Beliefs about Faith - ReligionFacts

Eastern church which was created in after the schism from the western Roman church; its head is the patriarch of Constantinople. (also called the Byzantine Church).

The church and its history The essence and identity of Christianity At its most basic, Christianity is the faith tradition that focuses on the figure of Jesus Christ. As a tradition , Christianity is more than a system of religious belief. It also has generated a culture , a set of ideas and ways of life, practices, and artifacts that have been handed down from generation to generation since Jesus first became the object of faith. Christianity is thus both a living tradition of faith and the culture that the faith leaves behind. The agent of Christianity is the church, the community of people who make up the body of believers. Few Christians, however, would be content to keep this reference merely historical. Although their faith tradition is historical. While there is something simple about this focus on Jesus as the central figure, there is also something very complicated. That complexity is revealed by the thousands of separate churches, sects, and denominations that make up the modern Christian tradition. To project these separate bodies against the background of their development in the nations of the world is to suggest the bewildering variety. To picture people expressing their adherence to that tradition in their prayer life and church-building, in their quiet worship or their strenuous efforts to change the world, is to suggest even more of the variety. Given such complexity, it is natural that throughout Christian history both those in the tradition and those surrounding it have made attempts at simplification. Modern scholars have located the focus of this faith tradition in the context of monotheistic religions. Christianity addresses the historical figure of Jesus Christ against the background of, and while seeking to remain faithful to, the experience of one God. It has consistently rejected polytheism and atheism. A second element of the faith tradition of Christianity, with rare exceptions, is a plan of salvation or redemption. That is to say, the believers in the church picture themselves as in a plight from which they need rescue. For whatever reason , they have been distanced from God and need to be saved. The agent of that redemption is Jesus Christ. It is possible that through the centuries the vast majority of believers have not used the term essence to describe the central focus of their faith. The term is itself of Greek origin and thus represents only one part of the tradition, one element in the terms that have gone into making up Christianity. Essence refers to those qualities that give something its identity and are at the centre of what makes that thing different from everything else. To Greek philosophers it meant something intrinsic to and inherent in a thing or category of things, which gave it its character and thus separated it from everything of different character. Thus, Jesus Christ belongs to the essential character of Christianity and gives it a unique identity. If most people are not concerned with defining the essence of Christianity, in practice they must come to terms with what the word essence implies. Whether they are engaged in being saved or redeemed on the one hand, or thinking and speaking about that redemption, its agent, and its meaning on the other, they are concentrating on the essence of their experience. Those who have concentrated from within the faith tradition have also helped to give it its identity. It is not possible to speak of the essence of a historical tradition without referring to how its ideal qualities have been discussed through the ages. Yet one can take up the separate subjects of essence and identity in sequence, being always aware of how they interrelate. Page 1 of

Eastern Christian theology is all-too-often thought of as having its primary concern for formal issues: dogmatics and doctrine, liturgy, iconography, and so on.

Endorsements This book is a very timely and useful resource Christianity has been growing in Africa at a geometric rate, and soon the continent will be home to one out of every four Christians in the world. Increasingly, Africans claim ownership of the question of what it means to be a Christian in the world today. So Christians worldwide need to know more about the character of the faith in places like eastern Africa. This book is a very timely and useful resource, whether you are a student just beginning to explore the topic, a more advanced scholar looking to move deeper into some of its finer points, or just a curious-minded reader with new African neighbors in church or down the street. Eastern Africa is a fine addition to a very important series. Joel Carpenter Calvin College This landmark study of Christianity in eastern Africa excels in breadth, depth, and insight. This landmark study of Christianity in eastern Africa excels in breadth, depth, and insight. The history it discloses is rich beyond imagination, its standpoint bracingly ecumenical Catholics, Anglicans, other missionary-founded churches [Lutherans, Quakers, Moravians], Pentecostals, African Independent Churches , its critiques boldly realistic. Most of all is the heartfelt empathy for all that the book describes. The authors succeed brilliantly in explaining what they call the vitality, the variety, and the volatility of their subject. Christian Voices from Asia and Africa This telling of the story of Christianity in eastern Africa is essential reading for anyone interested in the ongoing development of Christian tradition worldwide. Like a striking, stained glass window, Paul Kollman and Cynthia Toms Smedley successfully piece together a myriad of fragments “dark, light, and colorful” of the stories of Christianity in eastern Africa into one compelling, interpretive whole. This work is groundbreaking in the world-Christianity perspective the authors advocate and demonstrate: It scrutinizes the past through the lens of present realities, rightfully noting missionary contributions while prioritizing African responses and initiatives that have primarily shaped contemporary expressions of Christian faith. It also analyzes the local region of eastern Africa in relation to the broader world Christian movement, past and present. Artfully crafted and insightfully narrated, this telling of the story of Christianity in eastern Africa is essential reading for anyone interested in the ongoing development of Christian tradition worldwide. With lively prose and meticulous documentation, it covers the historical, theological, and social issues essential to understanding the nature of contemporary eastern African Christianity. The authors have produced an excellent book, useful for both specialists and generalists alike. Robert Boston University School of Theology Written in a readable style, this book will be an invaluable resource for students and lecturers across a range of disciplines, including church history, African history, religious studies, missiology and theology. This meticulously researched and comprehensive book eloquently unveils and analyses the variety, vitality and volatility of Christianity in eastern Africa, which has grown exponentially since the late nineteenth century to the present. It highlights the prominent role Christianity has played in social-political transformation of individuals and communities and in the development of theological thinking. This is the first book to draw out the historical development and character of Christianity in eastern Africa and relate it to the dynamics in world Christianity. The authors also provide biographies of key Christian personalities whose experiences disclose significant aspects of eastern African Christianity. Written in a readable style, this book will be an invaluable resource for students and lecturers across a range of disciplines, including church history, African history, religious studies, missiology and theology. It will interest anyone interested in the dynamics of Christianity in Africa. Philomena Njeri Mwaura Kenyatta University Essential reading for anyone interested in the ongoing development of Christian tradition worldwide "Like a striking, stained glass window, Paul Kollman and Cynthia Toms Smedley successfully piece together a myriad of fragments“dark, light, and colorful“of the stories of Christianity in eastern Africa into one compelling, interpretive whole.

Chapter 3 : Eastern Christianity - Eastern Christianity History

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The New Age religion, an amalgamation of Eastern religious practices and doctrines, is one peak in this influential movement that captures the minds of many younger people who enjoy the mysteries of spiritualism and that of the divine. The massive growth is also due to those who wish to extend beyond the confines of traditional religion, which in the West happens to be Christianity, in search for something diverse, mysterious, cultural, expressive, and foreign. As a result it is no longer surprising to see books, or sacred texts, dedicated to these religions in our Western bookstores, for instance one should, with minimal effort, come across the Vedas of Hinduism, the Pali Canon of Buddhism, and the Yi-Ching of Confucianism. However, in this brief blog article I wish to illustrate several differences between that of the Eastern religions and Christianity. This would help to give readers a better understanding of these mysterious Eastern faith systems that we may hear very little about in the West if one does not actively seek it. This blog article is surely by no means exhaustive. I shall add future additions in blog posts. In an Eastern worldview, Hinduism for instance, God is an impersonal force or principle that does not transcend nature, in other words the Hindus, and many other Easterners, are pantheists who believe that God is part of the natural world. This is entirely antithetical to Christian theism in the way that the Christian God totally transcends his creation. The Christian God is also personal as he is manifest in his creation, in our rationality, in our moral compass, and perhaps most notably in the historical person of Jesus. The Christian concept of God is an eternal, living, spirit being John 4: Being polytheistic Hinduism has a pantheon of over million of these gods, the most popular of these are Shiva, Brahma, and Vishnu of all who have come to earth in various incarnations to the aid of human beings or avatars. Furthermore, an Eastern worldview is also diametrically opposed to Christian theism in the way that the ultimate goal of humanity is to become one with nature because nature is God. The Eastern thought of man being divine sounds very similar to the very temptation by Satan in Eden: Christianity and Hinduism also differ greatly in their conception of the universe, or its beginning. In another blog article I noted that the Hindu sacred texts hold to a problematic view of the universe by denying Big Bang cosmology in favour of the oscillating model. In The Bible Genesis 1: As the physicist Victor Weisskopf succinctly puts it: Altogether this is different to that of Jesus who not only proclaimed the one true Kingdom of God, but also claimed to be the only way to God John This is unlike Buddha, and Krishna Muhammad, Smith, and others who never claimed such a thing, and thus Jesus stands in a class of his own. We are also told that Jesus is close to us in a personal way, in fact closer than any brother Proverbs That is impossible for Christianity as the entire belief system hinges upon Jesus, and his resurrection. On the other hand Hinduism has no known founder, prophet, or king that know of, nor does Confucianism have historical verification to support and establish it as a divine system. The teaching of Confucius basically was neither religious nor philosophical, but merely social. The Hindu Vedas are also not historical documents in the way that the Old and New Testaments are, of which detail many peoples, cultures, cities, nations etc. Many narratives in the Vedas are praises to many gods while other narratives seem to be that of mythical stories and events. From this it is difficult to discern whether the narratives are actually intended to be taken as history or symbolical. These details significantly separate the Christian religion from other Eastern faiths, and this has lead E. Harrison to write that: Christianity is not one of these. Eastern religion does not see man as one who has been separated from God, as opposed to Christian theism that clearly illustrates that all men have fallen short of the glory of God through sin Romans 3: Subsequently, in Hinduism the soul has always existed and will continue to exist until via a process of rebirths it has merged with the ultimate reality Brahman. The process of enlightenment and the journey to the ultimate reality is undergirded by the doctrine of karma "this means that everything from joy, sadness, wealth, health and affliction is the result of karma that is a debt paid off over lives, and in our present lives. This debt accumulates as a result bad choices and deeds one does in his life, and thus karma is simply seen as neither good nor bad, just reality. Such is again antithetical to Christian theism in the way that man is his own

saviour, he via decisions and choices will determine his future, as one commentator, David Bentley, adds: We cannot save ourselves, hence why God sent his Son Jesus to die for our sins. Jesus is the one who bridged chasm between humankind and God. Much of Buddhism and Hinduism seems to be about escape. One must pay off their karmic debt to achieve oneness with an ultimate reality, for the Buddhist he longs for Nirvana, the transcendent state in which there is no more suffering, desire, sense of self, and the where the person is released from the effects of karma and the cycle of death and rebirth. Whereas on Christianity there is a place called Heaven in which believers will go to be with God for eternity. In that place there will be fellowship with God John In a nutshell, Heaven will be the place where humans were meant to be. Quite to the contrary of some proponents of pluralism in our age that propound the notion that all religions or belief systems are the same, or that they are just different avenues to God, I think falls short of actuality. We clearly have seen that these differences above, of which are by no means exhaustive, illustrate this.

Chapter 4 : The Doctrine of the Orthodox Church: The Basic Doctrines

Eastern Mysticism is a more popular term for the worldview we are calling Far Eastern Thought (FET). For Westerners, FET is probably the most difficult of the four worldviews to fully comprehend. That is because it is so dramatically different from the primary worldview beliefs of Western cultures.

The Church, or rather the Church of the faithful, embodies the Christian faith, projects Christian hope, and gives life to Christian love. Christ entrusts His own Being to the Church, handing down divine Revelation, in oral form, and later recorded in written form, to constitute Tradition at large. In this Church, the truth is preserved, proclaimed, and shared sacredly among the faithful. This Church is the divine Workshop for the teaching and sanctification of the faithful. It is the depository of truths for their redemption. The Church is the whole strength of faithful and pious Christians. These people constitute the "royal priesthood" by their sanctification and dedication. The Church of the faithful embodies the "Conscience of the Church" in its pronouncements and missions. Jesus Christ, the cornerstone of the Church, is "the Lord God, who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty" Rev. Therefore, the Militant Church on earth is a part of the Kingdom of Heaven, for the King is ever present to lead and sanctify the members of His own Mystical Body. He is "Jesus Christ, Who is the faithful witness, and the first-begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood" Rev. This Church of Christ has in its nature the tendency to become and to grow; it has the nature to engulf and develop the truths of Revelation; it is to be delved into from time to time to find and pronounce the truths of which the Church is the Pillar. The Church, as a whole, is infallible, but it is not God-inspired to the extent that it has understood the entire depth of the truths and formulated and proclaimed them to the world. The Church, by nature and duty, from time to time - to settle controversies - formulates, defines, and pronounces some of these Revealed truths. In such instances, the Fathers of the Church have assembled in synods to discuss the disputed points and to decree and interpret the correct meaning of those truths. In doing so, the synods of the Fathers, as a whole and as individuals, have believed that their decisions are infallible. Their decisions, however, are not considered permanent until they are accepted by the "Conscience of the Church," the whole body of the faithful, clergy and laity, who must give their consent. The infallibility of the Church does not mean that the Church, in the assembly of the Fathers or in the expression of the Conscience of the Church, has already formally expressed all the truths of faith and norms. The infallibility of the Church is confined to the formulation of truths in question. This infallibility is not wholly a God-inspired energy, which would affect the participants of the synod to such an extent that they would be inspired to pronounce all the truths at one time as a whole system of a Christian catechism. The Synod does not formulate a system of beliefs encompassing all Christian teachings and truths, but only endeavors to define the particular disputed truth which has been misunderstood and misinterpreted. The Church of Christ and its divine nature, as set forth above, is the foundation upon which the Eastern Orthodox Church continues to administer and nourish its faithful, thereby protecting its fundamental essentials. The essentials of the Orthodox Church and its members can be divided into four main correlated parts: These sacred Sources are essential not only for correct teaching and worship, but especially as Sources of the promises and covenants of God fulfilled in the Person of Christ. The Father, out of love and compassion, sent Christ to save mankind and to remain forever in the Ecclesia which He founded. The content of the Scriptures was written by chosen and inspired persons, prophets and disciples, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the Supreme Author and Guardian under Whose direction and protection the Scriptures become the inspired and infallible Source of faith and salvation. The Fathers of the Church expounded the content of the Scriptures in sermons and homilies in order to spread their meaning and blessings so that the members of the Mystical Body of Christ would not be uninformed of the Good News for their spiritual welfare. In the Orthodox Church, the harmonious interpretation of the Revealed Word is necessary to present the faithful with a united, sound conviction. This does not mean that individuals, both clergy and laity, lack freedom to express their own spiritual insights, but the validity of these insights depends upon acceptance by other Fathers of the Church, without which it is wisest to keep silent and avoid being in

opposition. Thus, the theologian of the Orthodox Church has the freedom to present the same truths of the Scriptures in a new expression in order to contend with contemporary ideals and challenges of society. It is very important for the Church to provide sound interpretation of Christian Sources, so that the tendency of human imagination toward superstitious concepts can be curbed. The following are some fundamental teachings which are essential to the Orthodox Christian. Belief in the True God The Scriptures refer often to the nature and substance of God in which the Church should believe. It is characteristic that St. John recorded, "This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God" It is important that the Christian be led to believe not merely in a God, but specifically to believe in the "True God" as revealed in the Scriptures and in the Person and teachings of Jesus Christ. The Christian ascribes to the nature of the True God all attributes of the finest experiences he has known, from the enlightenment of the Gospel. He should see God as almighty, all-loving, and all-holy; as a loving Father and Creator; as a Spirit beyond place, time, and variation. Almighty God also is defined by the Fathers of the Church in terms that clarify what God is not. God as Creator created the heavens and the earth, the whole universe. Almighty God created man and provides for all his needs of life, giving sanctification as well as "newness of life" out of love. The doctrine of the Holy Trinity is in reality the declaration of the Christian faith, formulated and pronounced by the Ecumenical Synods of the One Undivided Church. It is impossible for the finite human mind to comprehend objectively the substance of the True God, true worship, and true norms of life. Human reasoning in regard to faith in the Holy Trinity is confined to formulating the truths which already have been revealed in the Scriptures and Sacred Tradition. The Church pronounces in its lucid liturgical confession: The Scriptures proclaim "to us there is but one God, the Father" 1 Cor. This fundamental belief in the Holy Trinity was the subject of all the Ecumenical Synods in which the unchangeable pronouncement on the Holy Trinity was affirmed. The truth can be reached only by faith, being above and beyond human comprehension. In the Orthodox Church, the Theotokos is highly honored, as expressed in praises recorded in the Scriptures with qualities mirrored in the Magnificat cf. Despite the high honor and the highest admiration which the Orthodox Church bestows upon the Virgin Mary Theotokos, it does not teach either her immaculate conception or her bodily assumption into the heavens. The Church venerates the Theotokos as "holder of Him Who is illimitable For the Christian, the Incarnation of Christ is a mystery. Apostle Paul, the most keen interpreter of the life of Christ, in his epistle to the Colossians writes that it was "the mystery hidden for ages and generations, but now made manifest to his saints" Col. Jesus Christ was sent for this divine mission "when the fullness of time was come" Gal. Christ was born with two perfect natures, the divine and human, as God-man. When a Christian refers to Christ in the Old and New Testaments, he should presuppose the fact of the two natures of Jesus Christ which are made manifest in His Gospel and deeds. Another essential in the life of Christ, which is indispensable for the Church faith, is the Crucifixion of Christ, which is considered the end of His humiliation and emptiness on earth. The Crucifixion of Jesus Christ nails to the Cross the sins of mankind. The Church considers this divine event the "sorrowful Easter," for it is linked with His Resurrection. Christ presented Himself, as "the resurrection and the life" John Without this belief in the Resurrection, the preaching and the faith of the Church is in vain, as Apostle Paul proclaims cf. The belief of the Church is that, on the third day, Jesus Christ rose again. The Resurrection of Christ is considered by the Church to be the supreme declaration of faith. In the Orthodox Church, the justification and salvation of man depends on the standard of "faith which worketh by love" Gal. The Church firmly opposed the opinion that the Holy Spirit was created by the Son, and it pronounced the correct belief in the Nicene Creed at the Second Ecumenical Synod. The Orthodox Church does not use the phrase filioque, "and of the Son. It is evident from the Scripture that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father only; this was the belief from the very beginning of the One Undivided Church. When the church in the West inserted the "filioque" phrase into the Creed, this innovation precipitated the Great Schism of the Undivided Church. The "filioque" phrase is an error. It is not found in the Scripture. It was not believed by the Undivided Church for eight centuries, including the church in the West. God instructed the first created human beings, Adam and Eve, in what they ought not to do. With them, "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now" Romans 8: For this reason, the Church uses sacred ceremonies instituted by Christ or His Apostles. The sacred ceremony of Baptism with that of Chrismation and the ceremony of the Holy Eucharist with that of

Confession are the sacred Mysteria sacraments which every Christian should receive as an active communicant of divine Grace. There are three other sacraments: They are granted to man, but are not obligatory, if not so desired. Jesus Christ commissioned His Apostles to "go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit" Matthew The Church of Christ from the beginning baptized its members by a priest immersing them thrice in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Immersion baptism was the practice of the early Church. Only one baptism is allowed. Therefore, by dispensation, the Orthodox Church accepts as valid those baptisms performed in other Christian churches which baptize their members in the name of the Holy Trinity. By Baptism, the Church holds that all optional and original sins are cleansed by the Grace of God. The Chrismation of a newly baptized person is the confirmation of his faith which is "the seal of the gift of the Holy Ghost. The Christian confesses his faith and sin, especially before partaking of Holy Communion, as a spiritual preparation for communion with God. The very first word of Christ recorded in the Scriptures was "Repent," This is the only voluntary decision required of the Christian, asking a "change of mind" from evil and negligence to the active faith in God through communion with Him. Absolution of sins is a divine act, for only God can forgive sins. In the Orthodox Church, the priest merely reads prayers, using verbs in the passive voice, invoking the remission of sins by God. This ceremony of the Holy Eucharist is both His sacrifice for the salvation of man and a sacred mysterion. The Holy Eucharist is the seal of the proclamation of the communion with God. It is the only Sacrament offered by the Church in which the elements of bread and wine not only carry the Grace of God, as a mysterion, but are "changed" into and "are" the very Body and the very Blood of Christ, being a propitiatory sacrifice. The institution of the Holy Eucharist is recorded in Matthew Jesus, during that night of the Mystic Supper, took bread, and blessed it, and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, and said: And he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. This awesome sacrifice has been entrusted to the Church to be re-enacted and given to the faithful for the nourishment of their faith and the forgiveness of their sins in remembrance of the Lord. The Orthodox Church maintains the practice of the early Church of giving both the Body and the Blood of Christ to all communicants, both clergymen and laymen. Spiritual preparation is necessary for the recipient "to prove himself"; otherwise, he "eateth For the officiation of the Holy Eucharist, the Orthodox Church has four liturgies.

Chapter 5 : Christianity - Wikipedia

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An Online Course, that appeared in four parts over the years This second course is specifically oriented to explain Orthodoxy to mental health practitioners, and serve as a useful resource for Orthodox Clergy and laity as well. Ethically, mental health practitioners should incorporate the spiritual values of their patients in the therapeutic process. The course would serve as an introduction of the Eastern Orthodox ethos and cultural traditions to these professionals. One of the most frequently questions I am asked as Chairman of the Chaplain and Pastoral Counseling Department of the Antiochian Archdiocese is for a referral to an Orthodox mental health practitioner. Sadly Orthodoxy is not a majority spiritual tradition in North America and Orthodox practitioners are few. This course is meant to aid in this inquiry. It also should be noted that this course is an updating and reworking of a recently published chapter: Psychotherapy with members of Eastern Orthodox Churches, Morelli, I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No man cometh to the Father, but by me. Moral and social agendas have become the main preoccupation of many Christian communities, while theological issues are often neglected. This dissociation between dogma and way of life, however contradicts the very nature of the religious life, which presupposes that faith should always be confirmed by deeds, and visa versa. Metropolitan Hilarion Alfeyev, The Mystery of Faith, The mission of the Orthodox Christian Church, at its most basic, is to continue and make available the restorative healing of mankind, both of persons and communities, entrusted to it by Jesus Christ, true God and true man, who restored to mankind the possibility of union with God, originally lost through human pride and rebellion sin. Five Patriarchates emerged, often called mother churches: Their ranking, based on a combination of political status Rome and Constantinople and religious importance Jerusalem, was determined by the Council of Chalcedon A. After the Great Schism A. Eventually, other important Orthodox cities attained Patriarchal status - Moscow A. Assembly of Orthodox Bishops However, cultural elements such as the languages of the Liturgies, the folk dances, dress, music and traditional food strongly influence the differing self-identities and practices of each, e. The overlapping of jurisdictions in one geographical area is highly irregular according to Church tradition Council of Chalcedon. A study based on a census of the Orthodox in North America Krindatch, showed a little over 1 million members and 2, parishes. Immediately following His death and Resurrection, His twelve chosen Apostles took his message Gospel to the corners of the earth. Three of them, the Jews, Sts. Matthew, Mark and John, wrote accounts Gospels of His life and teachings for the early Christian communities. Paul in his missionary journeys and wrote The Acts of the Apostles about the first Christian communities. The Four Missionary Journeys of St. Paul The Apostles appointed overseers "episkopoi," bishops to lead these communities. He is considered one of the greatest Apostles. So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by letter. Paul wrote, "I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions even as I have delivered them to you. And told the Ephesians: The written Old Testament Scriptures were compiled by St. Athanasius the Great, c. It must be emphasized that, for the Orthodox, Sacred Scripture can only be understood through the Holy Spirit-inspired Church, as is explained in an outstanding book that echoes the Mind of the Church: Scripture in Tradition Breck, The Mind of Christ is the Mind of The Orthodox Church In addition to Scripture, Orthodox Christians also consistently refer to the "Church Fathers" who, not teaching anything new, were only discovering what Jesus had taught and passing that on to the apostles and their successors, the bishops, as inspired by the Holy Spirit. McGuckin points out that it was understood by the bishops attending the councils [overseers, as in St. Summary of the Great Councils The various Eastern Orthodox Churches that share a unity in faith may seem very different to the non-Orthodox due to the differences in their languages and styles of worship. This is a result of the Apostles themselves adapting the basics of the faith to the various languages and cultures as they evangelized different parts of the world. These teachings in summary are: Full Council details are in Ware This is recited

in every Divine Liturgy of the Church as well as at Holy Baptism in which a person becomes a member of the Church - the Kingdom of God. The Mind of the Orthodox Church The Mind of the Church, refers to the collective teaching, by those who are recognized by the Church as authentic followers of Christ and whose teaching and way of life can be trusted, of what is needed to be a true follower of Christ. These teachers stand on, and within, the Gospel of Christ given to us by the Apostles that constitutes and judges the Church even today. Morelli, b Scripture in the Divine Liturgy A good example of the synergy of what makes up Holy Tradition is the intimate connection between the written Scripture and the Divine Liturgy. Metropolitan Hilarion Alfeyev highlights that both liturgical tradition and the Councils of the Church are reflective of the Church as "unconditional and indisputable authority. Many other holy men and women, both ordained and unordained, also displayed God-given gifts of healing and teaching. The Orthodox Ethos Orthodoxy, considered in some ways a primitive form of Christianity more rooted in its geographic origin, was thus less influenced by Western development and did not experience, for example, the development of the papacy, the Reformation or the Enlightenment. This is significant in terms of how Orthodoxy approaches both doctrine and spirituality. The Orthodox sense of the Godhead is that no human idea or name can capture God; He is beyond description. From an Orthodox theological perspective, God in actuality transcends all human vocabulary and knowledge. Affirming anything about God fails; He is more than anything humanly comprehensible. The Orthodox conclude, therefore, that God can be partially comprehended only by indicating what He is not. They considered this a statement of His incomprehensibility. But cataphatic knowledge has its limits. The way of negation corresponds to the spiritual ascent into the Divine abyss where words fall silent, where reason fades, where all human knowledge and comprehension cease, where God is. Christ revealed God the Father to us as Father. For the Orthodox, to change words, especially the words given to us by Christ, is to change theology. This is the basis of the Latin motto: *Lex orandi, lex credendi*, i. The Wedding Feast at Cana Sex and sexuality in marriage are an important part of the ethos of Orthodoxy. Marriage for Orthodox Christians replicates the creative energy of God, where the couple, as "one flesh," unites to create new life. The "theology of sex" based on Divine Love is at the level of the highest principle, infinitely beyond empathy or any other set of ethical standards. It references the essence of God Himself. John tells us ". God is love" 1Jn 4: This is the love we are to have for one another. Archimandrite Sophrony , p. Silouan the Athonite, echoing the Church Fathers, said: Self-sacrificial love conforms to the Great Commandment to love our neighbor more highly than ourselves. In so doing, we also love and honor God Mt Openness to replicating the creative act of God by bearing children during the marriage is emphasized in Orthodoxy and is essential for it to be considered a blessed marriage. However, decisions regarding the specifics of family planning are left to the couple to decide, though some secular forms of family planning, such as abortion and the morning-after pill, are, for Orthodox Christians, clearly unacceptable. After receiving the Eucharist at the Divine Liturgy, Orthodox sing, "We have seen the true light, we have received the heavenly Spirit; we have found the true faith, worshipping the undivided Trinity: In this regard, the words of Jesus are recalled: Learned helplessness in humans: *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, 87, Alfeyev, Bishop Hilarion, *The Mystery of Faith*. Darton, Longman and Todd. *Christ the Conqueror of Hell: The descent into Hades from an Orthodox perspective. On the Incarnation of Our Lord. Social Foundations of Thought and Action: A Social Cognitive Theory. Cognitive Therapy of Depression. Love is Never Enough: The cognitive basis of anger, hostility and violence. The bible and its interpretation in the Orthodox Church. Historical precedents for synergia: Combining Medicine, diakonia and sacrament in byzantine times. Integral healing in Orthodox Christianity. Holy Cross Orthodox Press. Reason and Emotion in Psychotherapy. A Guide to Rational Living. A Pathway to Overcoming Resentment and Creating a legacy of love. American Psychological Association Erwin, E. How firm is the evidence? *Nous*, 14, Exline, J.*

Eastern Christianity Noetic faculty Faith (pistis) in Eastern Christianity is an activity of the nous or spirit. Faith being characteristic of the noesis or noetic experience of the nous or spirit.

But in fact, Eastern Christian theology has only one primary purpose -- the divinization of life itself -- and the East-Christian world-outlook embraces all those formal fields, not merely as intellectual resources for illuminating the Truth, but rather as necessary knowledge framing and making possible the life of the soul on its path to God. In this understanding, the primary reason for the gift of life -- life which is the eschaton of Creation -- is so all that lives within the framework of Creation can reveal, witness, incorporate within itself, the Holy. This understanding is not to be perceived or grasped as an abstraction, a concept. It is not an idea found by intellection, nor is it a transcendental inner state of another-worldly kind. They are not called out of their culture; they are called to bless it. However, this very commitment to finding and revealing holiness in life carries within itself the seeds of a fundamental challenge: Is the dialogue with God which Eastern Christian theology provides sufficient to cope with the challenge of Life-in-the-World, or must a holy person incorporate into the dialogue something of the truths and values of the world? Can we evaluate bioethics without a knowledge of science? Can we love our neighbour if we understand nothing of his culture? Praxis is the conduct of a life through making decisions; does Orthodox knowledge and faith provide a sound basis for wise and holy deciding? What is the true relationship between what God needs of us and what social need places four-square before our eyes? These questions are perennial, facing everyone who has ever tried to live in the world while walking with God. But our own time and our own place have made this situation even more difficult, for everyone but especially for Eastern Christians with their strong appeal to Tradition. Students in this year-long course will have an opportunity, through discussions of many concrete issues of our times, to evaluate these profound issues of the problems of living in a social world and the deeper issue of what applicability their Eastern Christian knowledge has in providing a foundation for meaningful solutions to those Life-problems, and by what methods this knowledge might be made to work in ways that are respectful of the realities of the world. The central issue in both cases is the same: How can meaningful solutions be found for these key Life-problems which are at once practically useful and provide a true Christian witness? Scripture tells Orthodox Christians that there can be no compromise with the world; Orthodox praxis tells them that every life-decision engages *oikonomia* -- merciful understanding of the problems of life in a way which keeps strict faith with Holy Tradition and also seeks a humanly possible, Anthropology-respecting, solution to a problem. Particular Topics Among topics to be considered will be the following; in every case we will be discussing how an Orthodox believer with an educated grounding in The Orthodox Tradition would approach and defend stances on questions such as: Issues of church and state: In societies where Orthodoxy is the major church, should it seek Establishment? Women in society and the Church: Is the special question of ordination of women a theological, or a cultural issue? What stand should Eastern Christians take with regard to the possibilities of biotechnology and its potential for human social engineering? What about end-of-life issues? General ethics and epistemological issues: Is there a universal ethic, or are morals existentially personal? Can Orthodox Christians cope with a culture which firmly advocates plurality of truth, at least in dialogue? What is the Eastern stance on crime and retributive justice? How should abortion laws be regarded, and are they an issue of bioethics or of juridical ethics? What is the ethical Orthodox response to suffering? Wealth, social care, and charity: Does the Orthodox world-view entail any particular forms of social order? What is the Scriptural, and the patristic basis for understanding social disparities, especially economic disparities? And what is the appropriate Christian response? The gospel of love leaves no room for doubt about the priority of charity and care for the poor, but for the Orthodox world-view, what is the appropriate stewardship, the useful form of such charity, in the modern world? How does this social issue affect our understanding of Christian Anthropology? To what extent is concern for the environment and ecological consciousness a grounded priority in Orthodox awareness and outlook? What are the patristic and Scriptural bases for this view? In particular, is vigorous and activist environmentalism defensible as synergy with the

energies of the creative Trinity, and not just as pragmatic self-protection? Are ethics toward animals, or toward all life, an environmental issue, a bio-ethical issue, or an extension of general ethics? How does this environmental outlook change our understanding of Christian Anthropology? Marriage and human sexuality: In Orthodox praxis there are many rules surrounding marriage and sexuality; what is the Anthropological grounding on which they are based? When approached from the viewpoint of Orthodox ethics and of love, should some of these rules or practices be regarded as theologoumena, and be open to further discussion? In particular, what should be said about divorce, death of a spouse, priestly marriage, same-sex attraction? What does the view of marriage and sexuality say about Orthodox Anthropology? And how does this affect Orthodox ethical stance on disparity of cult in Christian intermarriage? Does Orthodoxy know of timeless ethical norms? How should we respond to a world where there is so much international lawlessness and violent crime against humanity? What message should orthodox military chaplains bring to their evangelism? What understanding does hagiography contribute to this question? Missions, missiology, and diversity of cultures: In light of modern multiculturalism, on what basis should Orthodox carry out mission and evangelism? In what terms, with what language should Orthodox speak to non-Orthodox? Is it justifiable to evangelize other Christians? How much of Orthodox praxis -- especially liturgical rubrics -- must be conveyed in outreach to other cultures? What about the special cases of liturgical language and ethnic uniformity in an Orthodox community? Relationship to non-Christians; multifaith activities: Is there room for interfaith marriage?

Chapter 7 : What is the Eastern Orthodox Church and what are the beliefs of Orthodox Christians?

Question: "What is the Eastern Orthodox Church and what are the beliefs of Orthodox Christians?" Answer: The Eastern Orthodox Church is not a single church but rather a family of 13 self-governing bodies, denominated by the nation in which they are located (e.g., the Greek Orthodox Church, Russian Orthodox Church).

Bring fact-checked results to the top of your browser search. Eastern Christianity The classic forms of Eastern Christian mysticism appeared toward the end of the 2nd century, when the mysticism of the early church began to be expressed in categories of thought explicitly dependent on the Greek philosophical tradition of Plato and his followers. The philosophical emphasis on the unknowability of God found an echo in many biblical texts, affirming that the God of Abraham and the Father of Jesus could never be fully known. The understanding of the role of the preexistent Logos, or Word, of The Gospel According to John in the creation and restoration of the universe was clarified by locating the Platonic conception of Ideas in the Logos. The notion of deification theiosis fit with the New Testament emphasis on becoming sons of God and texts such as 2 Peter 1: These adaptations later provided an entry for the language of union with God, especially after the notion of union became more explicit in Neoplatonism , the last great pagan form of philosophical mysticism. Many of these themes are already present in germ in the works of Clement of Alexandria , written in about They are richly developed in the thought of Origen , the greatest Christian writer of the pre-Constantinian period and the earliest major speculative mystic in Christian history. This was the achievement of early Christian monasticism , the movement into the desert that began to transform ideals of Christian perfection at the beginning of the 4th century. The combination of the religious experience of the desert Christians and the generally Origenist theology that helped shape their views created the first great strand of Christian mysticism, one that remains central to the East and that was to dominate in the West until the end of the 12th century. Though not all Eastern Christian mystical texts were deeply imbued with Platonism, all were marked by the monastic experience. The first great mystical writer of the desert was Evagrius Ponticus , whose works were influenced by Origen. Gregory of Nyssa , the younger brother of St. The writings of the Pseudo-Dionysius also popularized the threefold division of the mystical life into purgative, illuminative, and unitive stages. Later Eastern mystical theologians, especially Maximus the Confessor in the 7th century, adopted much of this thought but imbued it with greater Christological emphasis, showing that union with God is possible only through the action of the God-man. Eastern mystics distinguish between the essence of God and divine attributes, which they regard as energies that penetrate the universe. The divinization of humanity is fundamental to Eastern mysticism. This culminated in the ecstatic vision of the divine Light and was held to divinize the soul through the divine energy implicit in the name of Jesus. Although much of this program appears in the writings of Symeon the New Theologian c. This rich form of Christian mysticism found a new centre in the Slavic lands after the conquest of the Greek East by the Turks. It experienced a flowering in Russia , beginning with the Philokalia , an anthology of ascetical and mystical texts first published in , and continuing to the Revolution of Eastern Christian mysticism is best known in the West through translations of the anonymous 19th-century Russian text The Way of the Pilgrim, but noted Russian mystics, such as Seraphim of Sarov and John of Kronshtadt , also became known in the West during the 20th century. Among mystic sects native to Russia, the Dukhobors , who originated in the 18th century among the peasants, resembled the Quakers in their indifference to outer forms and their insistence on the final authority of the Inner Light. They were severely persecuted and migrated to Canada early in the 20th century. In the Eastern as in the Western Church mystical religion was at times declared heretical. They were accused of neglecting the sacraments for ceaseless prayer and of teaching a materialistic vision of God. Later mystics, both orthodox and suspect, have been accused of Messalianism.

Chapter 8 : Understanding World Christianity: Eastern Africa | Fortress Press

Christianity - Eastern Christianity: The classic forms of Eastern Christian mysticism appeared toward the end of the 2nd century, when the mysticism of the early church began to be expressed in categories of thought explicitly dependent on the Greek philosophical tradition of Plato and his followers.

The Christian concept of the Messiah differs significantly from the contemporary Jewish concept. The core Christian belief is that through belief in and acceptance of the death and resurrection of Jesus, sinful humans can be reconciled to God and thereby are offered salvation and the promise of eternal life. Jesus, having become fully human, suffered the pains and temptations of a mortal man, but did not sin. As fully God, he rose to life again. According to the New Testament, he rose from the dead, [38] ascended to heaven, is seated at the right hand of the Father [39] and will ultimately return [Acts 1: In comparison, his adulthood, especially the week before his death, is well documented in the gospels contained within the New Testament, because that part of his life is believed to be most important. The death and resurrection of Jesus are usually considered the most important events in Christian theology, partly because they demonstrate that Jesus has power over life and death and therefore has the authority and power to give people eternal life. Arguments over death and resurrection claims occur at many religious debates and interfaith dialogues. Salvation Christianity Paul the Apostle, like Jews and Roman pagans of his time, believed that sacrifice can bring about new kinship ties, purity and eternal life. The Catholic Church teaches that salvation does not occur without faithfulness on the part of Christians; converts must live in accordance with principles of love and ordinarily must be baptized. Reformed theology places distinctive emphasis on grace by teaching that individuals are completely incapable of self-redemption, but that sanctifying grace is irresistible. Together, these three persons are sometimes called the Godhead, [56] [57] [58] although there is no single term in use in Scripture to denote the unified Godhead. Though distinct, the three persons cannot be divided from one another in being or in operation. While some Christians also believe that God appeared as the Father in the Old Testament, it is agreed that he appeared as the Son in the New Testament, and will still continue to manifest as the Holy Spirit in the present. But still, God still existed as three persons in each of these times. In some Early Christian sarcophagi the Logos is distinguished with a beard, "which allows him to appear ancient, even preexistent. From earlier than the times of the Nicene Creed, Christianity advocated [63] the triune mystery -nature of God as a normative profession of faith. According to Roger E. Olson and Christopher Hall, through prayer, meditation, study and practice, the Christian community concluded "that God must exist as both a unity and trinity", codifying this in ecumenical council at the end of the 4th century. The distinction lies in their relations, the Father being unbegotten; the Son being begotten of the Father; and the Holy Spirit proceeding from the Father and in Western Christian theology from the Son. Regardless of this apparent difference, the three "persons" are each eternal and omnipotent. The Greek word trias [66] [note 3] is first seen in this sense in the works of Theophilus of Antioch; his text reads: It is found in many passages of Origen. Trinitarianism Trinitarianism denotes those Christians who believe in the concept of the Trinity. Almost all Christian denominations and churches hold Trinitarian beliefs. Since that time, Christian theologians have been careful to emphasize that Trinity does not imply that there are three gods the antitrinitarian heresy of Tritheism, nor that each hypostasis of the Trinity is one-third of an infinite God partialism, nor that the Son and the Holy Spirit are beings created by and subordinate to the Father Arianism. Rather, the Trinity is defined as one God in three Persons. Nontrinitarianism Nontrinitarianism or antitrinitarianism refers to theology that rejects the doctrine of the Trinity. Various nontrinitarian views, such as adoptionism or modalism, existed in early Christianity, leading to the disputes about Christology. Christianity, like other religions, has adherents whose beliefs and biblical interpretations vary. Christianity regards the biblical canon, the Old Testament and the New Testament, as the inspired word of God. The traditional view of inspiration is that God worked through human authors so that what they produced was what God wished to communicate. The Greek word referring to inspiration in 2 Timothy 3: Others claim inerrancy for the Bible in its original manuscripts, although none of those are extant. Still others maintain that only a particular translation is inerrant, such as the King James

Version. The books of the Bible accepted by the Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant churches vary somewhat, with Jews accepting only the Hebrew Bible as canonical; there is however substantial overlap. These variations are a reflection of the range of traditions, and of the councils that have convened on the subject. Every version of the Old Testament always includes the books of the Tanakh, the canon of the Hebrew Bible. These books appear in the Septuagint, but are regarded by Protestants to be apocryphal. However, they are considered to be important historical documents which help to inform the understanding of words, grammar and syntax used in the historical period of their conception. Modern scholarship has raised many issues with the Bible. Another issue is that several books are considered to be forgeries. The injunction that women "be silent and submissive" in 1 Timothy 2 [83] is thought by many to be a forgery by a follower of Paul, a similar phrase in 1 Corinthians 14, [84] which is thought to be by Paul, appears in different places in different manuscripts and is thought to originally be a margin note by a copyist. A final issue with the Bible is the way in which books were selected for inclusion in the New Testament. Other Gospels have now been recovered, such as those found near Nag Hammadi in , and while some of these texts are quite different from what Christians have been used to, it should be understood that some of this newly recovered Gospel material is quite possibly contemporaneous with, or even earlier than, the New Testament Gospels. The core of the Gospel of Thomas, in particular, may date from as early as AD 50 although some major scholars contest this early dating, [86] and if so would provide an insight into the earliest gospel texts that underlie the canonical Gospels, texts that are mentioned in Luke 1: Scholarship, then, is currently exploring the relationship in the Early Church between mystical speculation and experience on the one hand and the search for church order on the other, by analyzing new-found texts, by subjecting canonical texts to further scrutiny, and by an examination of the passage of New Testament texts to canonical status. Catholic interpretation Main article: Catholic theology of Scripture In antiquity, two schools of exegesis developed in Alexandria and Antioch. Alexandrian interpretation, exemplified by Origen, tended to read Scripture allegorically, while Antiochene interpretation adhered to the literal sense, holding that other meanings called *theoria* could only be accepted if based on the literal meaning. The spiritual sense is further subdivided into: The allegorical sense, which includes typology. An example would be the parting of the Red Sea being understood as a "type" sign of baptism. The anagogical sense, which applies to eschatology, eternity and the consummation of the world Regarding exegesis, following the rules of sound interpretation, Catholic theology holds: The injunction that all other senses of sacred scripture are based on the literal [92] [93] That the historicity of the Gospels must be absolutely and constantly held [94] That scripture must be read within the "living Tradition of the whole Church" [95] and That "the task of interpretation has been entrusted to the bishops in communion with the successor of Peter, the Bishop of Rome". Clarity of Scripture Protestant Christians believe that the Bible is a self-sufficient revelation, the final authority on all Christian doctrine, and revealed all truth necessary for salvation. This concept is known as *sola scriptura*. The significance of the text includes the ensuing use of the text or application. The original passage is seen as having only a single meaning or sense. The moment we neglect this principle we drift out upon a sea of uncertainty and conjecture. Taken together, both define the term Biblical hermeneutics.

Chapter 9 : Eastern Orthodox theology - Wikipedia

Eastern religion does not see man as one who has been separated from God, as opposed to Christian theism that clearly illustrates that all men have fallen short of the glory of God through sin (Romans), and thus are separated from God (Isaiah), even though we are made in his image (Genesis).

Today, the highest concentration of Orthodox Christians remains in the former Byzantine Empire Greece, Turkey, and nearby countries and in Russia. But Orthodoxy is found throughout the world, and approximately million people are Orthodox Christians. Orthodox Christianity has similarities and differences with the two other large branches of the Christian faith, which are Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. The three share beliefs on certain core doctrines such as the sinfulness of man, the Trinity, and the physical resurrection of Jesus Christ. There are important theological differences among these groups as well - see links to comparison charts below. The separation was not sudden. For centuries there had been significant religious, cultural, and political differences between the Eastern and Western churches. Religiously, they had different views on topics such as the use of images icons , the nature of the Holy Spirit, and the date on which Easter should be celebrated. Culturally, the Greek East has always tended to be more philosophical, abstract and mystical in its thinking, whereas the Latin West tends toward a more pragmatic and legal-minded approach. According to an old saying, "the Greeks built metaphysical systems; the Romans built roads. Upon his death, the empire was divided between his two sons, one of whom ruled the western half of the empire from Rome while the other ruled the eastern region from Constantinople. These various factors finally came to a head in AD, when Pope Leo IX excommunicated the patriarch of Constantinople the leader of the Eastern church. In response, the patriarch anathematized condemned the Pope, and the Christian church has been divided into West "Roman Catholic" and East "Greek Orthodox" ever since. A glimmer of hope for reconciliation came at the onset of the Crusades later that century, when the West came to the aid of the East against the Turks. But especially after the Fourth Crusade , in which crusaders sacked and occupied Constantinople, the only result was an increase in hostility between the two churches. However, attempts at reconciliation have been renewed in recent years. In , the Second Vatican Council issued this statement praising its Eastern counterparts: The Catholic Church values highly the institutions of the Eastern Churches, their liturgical rites, ecclesiastical traditions, and their ordering of Christian life. For in those churches, which are distinguished by their venerable antiquity, there is clearly evident the tradition which has come from the Apostles through the Fathers and which is part of the divinely revealed, undivided heritage of the Universal Church. As in all of Christianity, doctrine is important in Eastern Orthodoxy. Orthodox Christians attach great importance to the Bible, the conclusions of the Seven Ecumenical Councils, and right "orthodox" belief. However, the Eastern Churches approach religious truth differently than the Western Churches. For Orthodox Christians, truth must be experienced personally. There is less focus on the exact definition of religious truth and more on the practical and personal experience of truth in the life of the individual and the church. Precise theological definition, when it occurs, is for the purpose of excluding error. This emphasis on personal experience of truth flows into Orthodox theology, which has a rich heritage. Especially in the first millennium of Christian history, the Eastern Church produced significant theological and philosophical thought. In the Western churches, both Catholic and Protestant, sin, grace, and salvation are seen primarily in legal terms. The Eastern churches see the matter in a different way. For Orthodox theologians, humans were created in the image of God and made to participate fully in the divine life. The full communion with God that Adam and Eve enjoyed meant complete freedom and true humanity, for humans are most human when they are completely united with God. The result of sin, then, was a blurring of the image of God and a barrier between God and man. The situation in which mankind has been ever since is an unnatural, less human state, which ends in the most unnatural aspect: This process of repairing the unity of human and divine is sometimes called "deification. In its Christology, Orthodoxy tends to emphasize the divine, preexistent nature of Christ, whereas the West focuses more on his human nature. The process of being reunited to God, made possible by Christ, is accomplished by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit plays a central role in Orthodox worship: It is in the view of the Holy Spirit that Orthodox theology differs

from Western theology, and although the difference might now seem rather technical and abstract, it was a major contributor to the parting of East from West in the 11th century. This dispute is known as the Filioque Controversy, as it centers on the Latin word filioque "and from the Son" , which was added to the Nicene Creed in Spain in the 6th century. The original creed proclaimed only that the Holy Spirit "proceeds from the Father. Organization and Religious Authority The Orthodox Church is organized into several regional, autocephalous governed by their own head bishops churches. The Patriarch of Constantinople has the honor of primacy, but does not carry the same authority as the Pope does in Catholicism. The religious authority for Orthodox Christianity is not the Pope as in Catholicism, nor the individual Christian with his Bible as in Protestantism, but the scriptures as interpreted by the seven ecumenical councils of the church. Orthodoxy also relies heavily on the writings of early Greek fathers such as Gregory of Nyssa, John Chrysostom and St. Although some Orthodox confessions of faith were produced in the 17th century as counterparts to those of the Reformation, these are regarded as having only historical significance. Orthodox Worship and Religious Practices Orthodox worship is highly liturgical and is central to the history and life of the church: It helps to account for the survival of Christianity during the many centuries of Muslim rule in the Middle East and the Balkans when the liturgy was the only source of religious knowledge or experience.