

Protestant Faith from an Orthodox Christian Perspective



Apologetics

ἀπολογία, "speaking in defense"

REMINDER:

always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear

1 Peter 3:15

“giving a defense through the systematic use of reason or logic”

O.T.

Christ

33 A.D.

The Faith of the One Holy *Catholic* and Apostolic Church

Jerusalem

Antioch

Alexandria

Rome

Constantinople

451 A.D.

Arianism

Church of Rome split from Orthodoxy

1054 A.D.

431 AD

Nestorianism
(Assyrian Church of the East)

Protestants split from Church of Rome

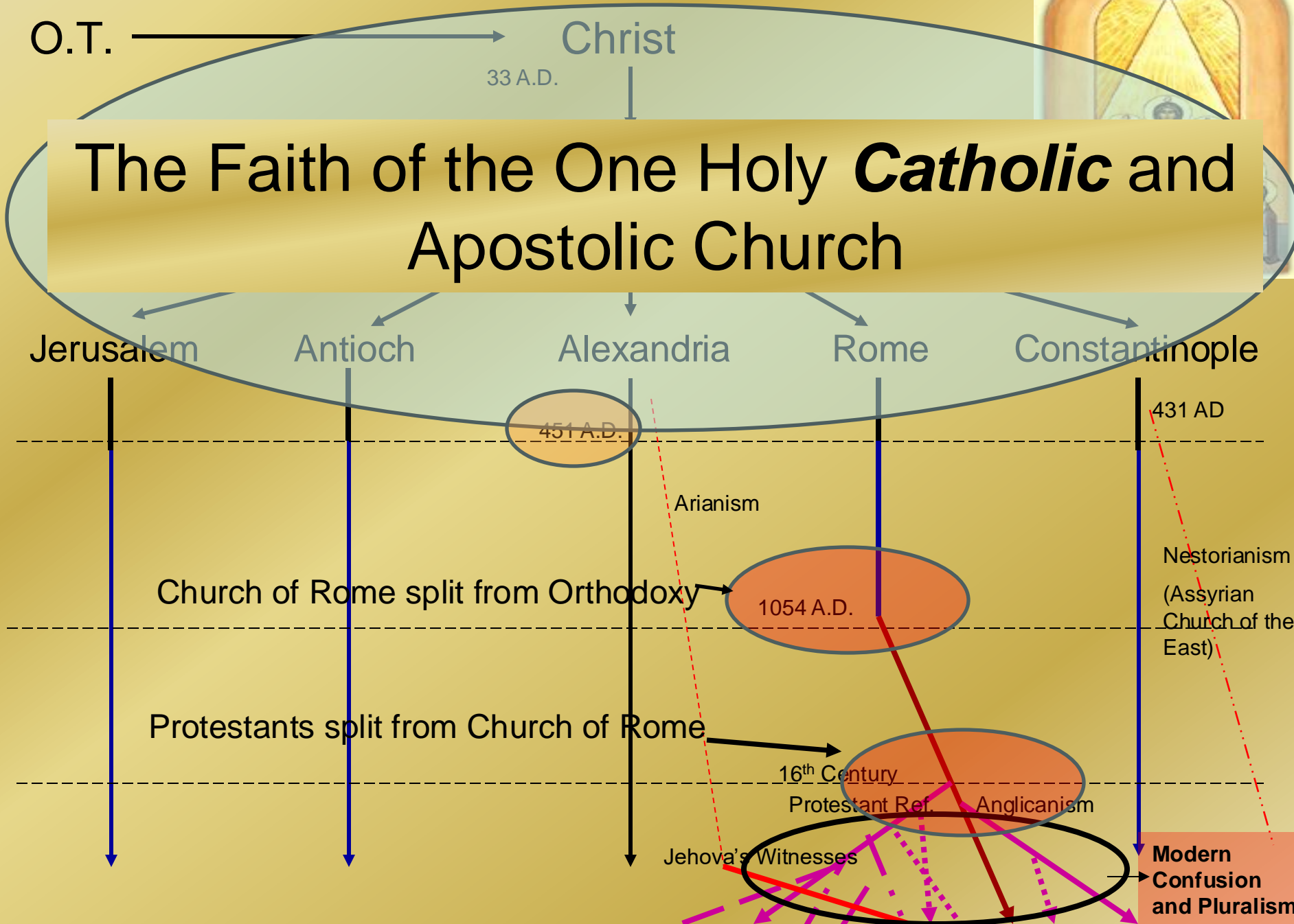
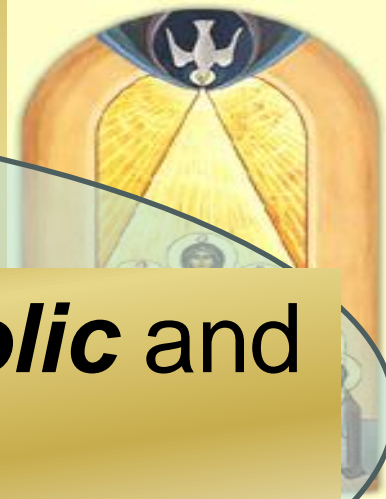
16th Century

Protestant Ref.

Anglicanism

Jehova's Witnesses

Modern
Confusion
and Pluralism



Some Similarities with the Orthodox



Some Similarities with the Orthodox

- Purgatory
- Immaculate Conception of St. Mary
- Supremacy of the Pope
- Infallibility of the Pope

“Are you protestant too??”



Martin Luther



Protestant (against Roman Catholic Church)

- Began in 1517 with Martin Luther, a German monk posted his **ninety-five (95)** theses (questions and objections) on the door of a Roman Catholic Church about its faith and practice
- Among the objections, Luther argued that the church had to be reformed against:

- the sale of indulgences (prayers and absolutions) to obtain forgiveness and to shorten time in “purgatory” and how such practices do not lead to true repentance

The Pope of Rome condemned the Reformation movement, and Luther was excommunicated from the church of Rome in 1521.

Luther's later followers:

“Threw out the baby with the bath water”



The Good Stuff that Protestants Threw out



The Baby (important things that protestants Threw away over time)

- No Holy Tradition
 - No sacraments
 - No altar
 - No intercession of the Saints
 - No church fathers
 - No Apostolic Succession
 - No necessity for good deeds
 - Deuterocanonical books

~~Sola Scriptura~~

Then the Spirit said to Philip, “Go near and overtake this chariot.”

So Philip ran to him, and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah, and said, “Do you understand what you are reading?”

And he said, “How can I, **unless someone guides me?**”

....³⁵ Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him. Acts 8 29-31

The Holy Bible (ONLY?)

Many '*Christian*' denominations interpret it differently

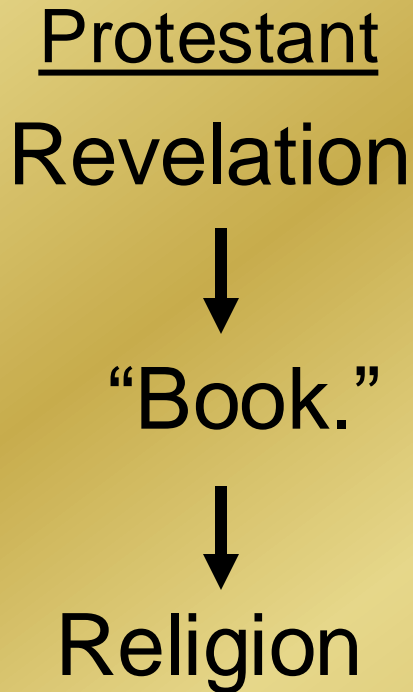
- "All scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness." -2 Timothy 3:16

Is this on its own sufficient for a correct understanding of the Faith?

- .The Eucharist IS/IS NOT the True Body and Blood of Christ.
- .Baptism IS/IS NOT Necessary for Salvation
- .Jesus IS/IS NOT God Incarnate (JW, SDA, CoG, Christadelphians etc.)
- .There IS/IS NOT immediate Life after death
- .There IS/IS NOT priesthood in Christianity

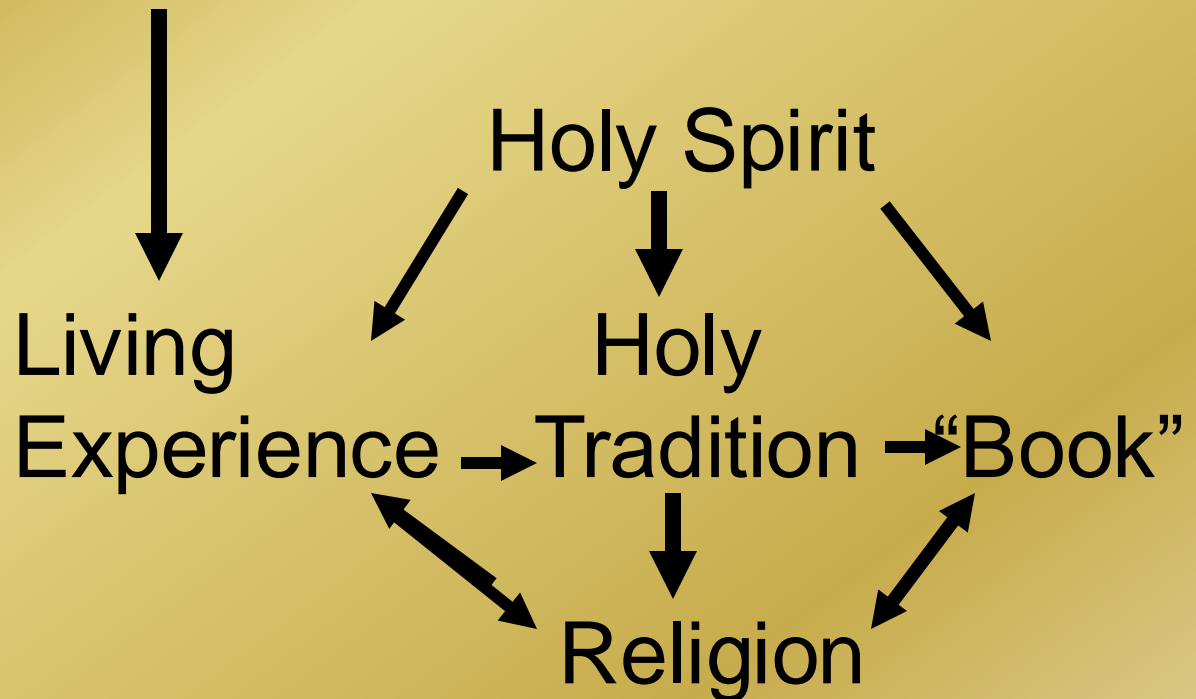
“People of the Book”

Concepts of Religious Foundation



Orthodox Christianity:

Revelation



Connect to Christianity by Living It and learning from those who did

- E.g. Students doing history report sent on assignment to have dinner with holocaust survivor family
- The Written Word and Holy Tradition go together for proper understanding and application
- Reading it is VERY important, but alone is not the totality of knowing God.
- The experience and learning from those who lived and applied it is necessary for a fuller, more complete, correct understanding, of the Faith.

- The writer (Church) has the authority to correctly interpret what is written, because she wrote it (by Inspiration of the Holy Spirit).
- She wrote that “diary” out of her own experience of God.

Holy Tradition

“Holy Tradition is the deposit of faith given by Jesus Christ to the Apostles and passed on in the Church from one generation to the next without addition, alteration or subtraction.”

“the life of the Holy Spirit in the Church.”

-Orthodox Author

What Came First? (Bible or Tradition)

The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? -1 Cor 10:16

The Divine Liturgy and breaking of bread was being celebrated before the above text was written.

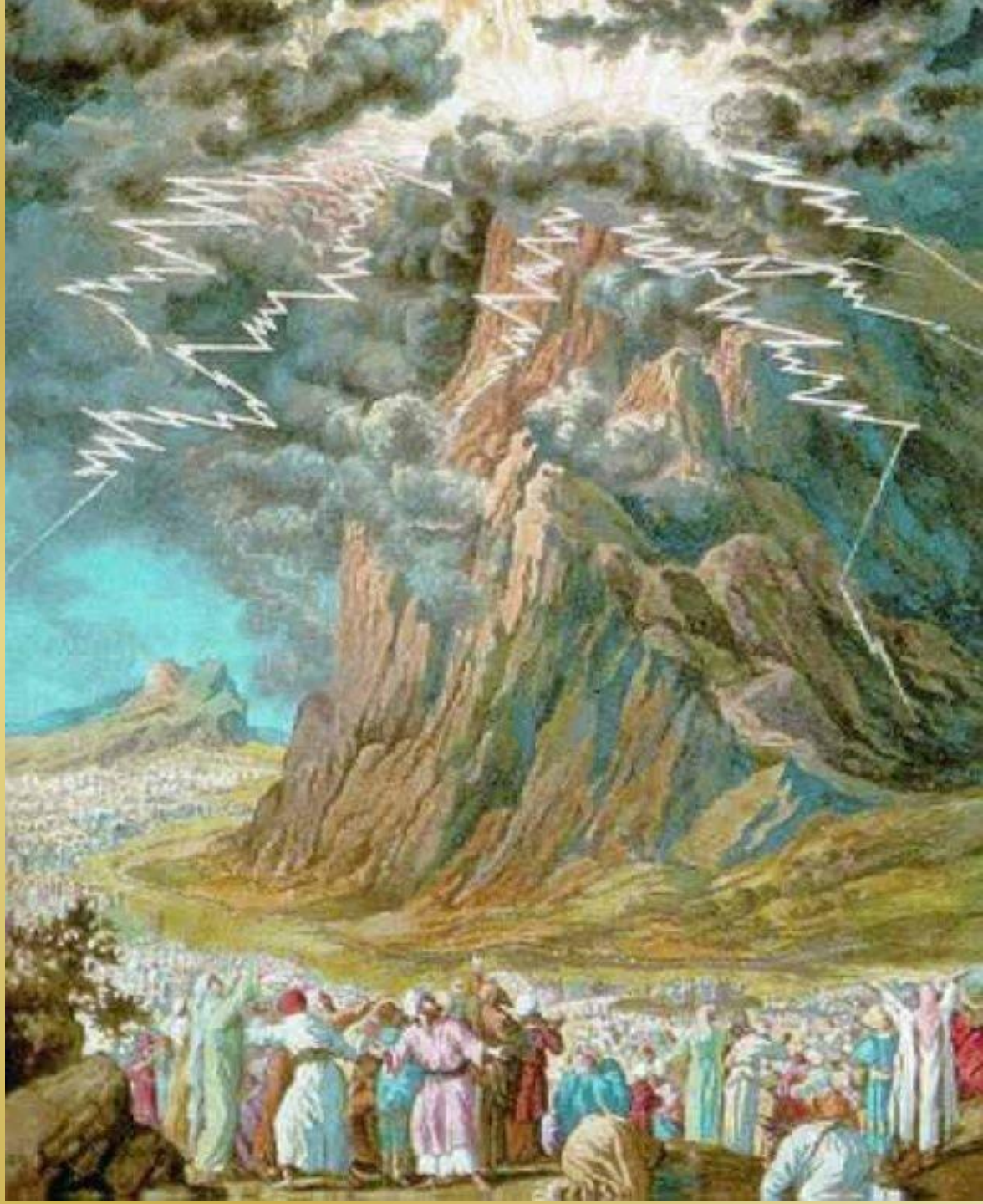
H.H. Pope Shenouda on Holy Tradition

“A long time elapsed before there was any written gospel or epistle....people received the entire faith, the entire story of Christ together with His teachings and His redemption, through Tradition....There was no written gospel (Good News) but there was preaching of the Good News representing the oral Gospel or the Divine teaching which was taught through entrustment. The same meaning applies to the Lord's words to His disciples: ***"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every***

creature" (Mark. 16: 15). **That command was not within the written boundary.”**

-Comparative Theology by H.H. Pope Shenouda III

- **Jews Experience followed by Oral Tradition**
- **Witness of whole Nation of God on the Mountain- not just one man. All of Israel Heard His Thunder**
- **Deuteronomy 31:22: Witness by Song**



Tradition in the Gospel of Luke

- *Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were **eyewitnesses** and servants of the word. With this in mind, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the **certainty** of the things you have been taught. Luke 1:1-4*

(Note: the oral word preceded the written word= Holy Tradition”

Why Believe in Christianity at all?

-Eyewitnesses who were martyred for their eyewitness testimony about the Faith

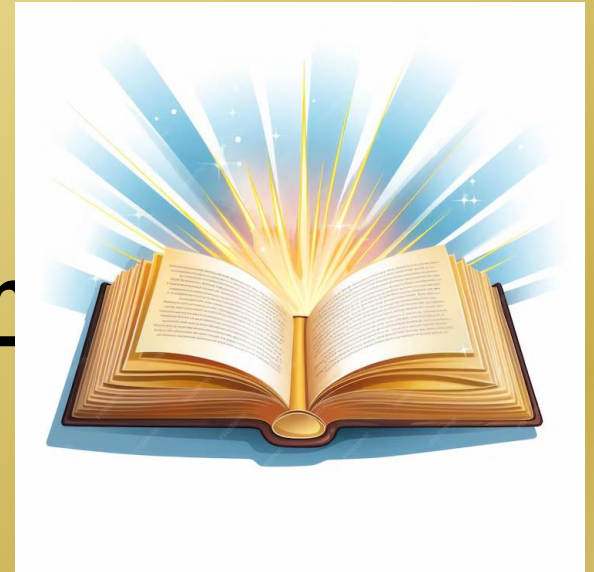
-Fulfilled prophecy

“I don’t believe in Tradition. I only Believe in the Bible”

Rebuttal:

The Bible itself is a Tradition

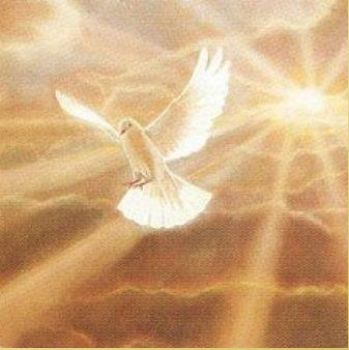
It is the Church, the People of God, with their overseers, guided by the Holy Spirit, that told us what the Bible is and is not.





- “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, **He will guide you into all truth**;He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.” John 16:12-14

- **2 Thessalonians 2:15**
- Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the **traditions** which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle.



The Holy Spirit would not have taught contradictions to the Church since He descended upon the Disciples at Pentecost until today. He only taught the Truth and continues to do so in the Orthodox Church.

What did the early Christians teach?
E.g. Saint Polycarp, Saint Ireneus,
Saint Ignatius, etc.

“Saved by Faith Alone” / Faith Plus Nothing ? (Protestant Doctrine)

*You see then that a man is justified by works,
and not by faith only. - James 2:24*

Show me your **faith** without your **works**, and I
will show you **my faith by my works**. James 2:18

Church Fathers

They didn't just read the Bible, they Lived it.

- What did the Disciples and Early Fathers believe?
- What did Christians believe at that time?
- If I want to be a Christian should I believe what they believed?

How did the Orthodox Church understand these words since the beginning?

- *“Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”*
(John 20: 22, 23)

St. Cyprian of Carthage (c 251 A.D.)

- “... But [the impenitent] spurn and despise all these warnings; before their sins are expiated, before they have made a **confession** of their crime, before their conscience has been purged in the ceremony and **at the hand of the priest** . . . they do violence to [the Lord’s] body ...

- “Of how much greater faith and salutary fear are they who . . . **confess their sins to the priests of God** in a straightforward manner and in sorrow, making an open declaration of conscience. . . . I beseech you, brethren, let everyone who has sinned confess his sin while he is still in this world, while his confession is still admissible, while the satisfaction and **remission made through the priests** are still pleasing before the Lord” (The Lapsed 15:1–3 (A.D. 251)).

- Sinners may do penance for a set time, and according to the rules of discipline come to ...confession, and **by imposition of the hand of the bishop and clergy receive the right of Communion...** [1 Cor. 11:27]” (Letters 9:2 [A.D. 253]).

- **St. Athanasius (c. 373):**
- “As the man whom the priest baptizes is enlightened by the grace of the Holy Ghost, so does he who in penance confesses his sins, **receive through the priest** forgiveness in virtue of the grace of Christ” (Frag. contra Novat. in P.G., XXVI, 1315).

-St. John Chrysostom.

- “For those to whom [the right of binding and loosing] has been given, it is plain that either both are allowed, or it is clear that neither is allowed. Both are allowed to the Church, neither is allowed to heresy. **For this right has been granted to priests only**”