

## Questions and Reflections for Discussion

to be used with Volume I, Doctrine and Scripture, of the revised four-volume series  
*The Orthodox Faith* by Father Thomas Hopko

### *Introduction*

When Father Thomas Hopko of blessed memory was in the process of revising his series *The Orthodox Faith*, he requested the Department of Christian Education of the Orthodox Church in America, which had originally published the series, to create discussion questions to accompany the texts of each volume. The following questions are the fulfillment of his request for the Doctrine and Scripture volume of the series. Questions for the Church History volume are already available, and questions for the other two volumes will be forthcoming.

There are questions for each chapter of this volume. They can be used to review and talk about the material in the chapter. Page numbers, in parentheses, follow each question to show where it comes from.

A separate document gives answers to the questions, with corresponding numbers. If the book is being used by a group, we would suggest that the discussion leader, after the group has read the chapter, give each participant a copy of the questions for that chapter. They can answer them together. The leader can have a copy of the answer pages for that chapter to check answers if need be, though most of the answers should easily be found in the chapter text. A reader using the book on his or her own can use the questions and answers in whatever way is most helpful.

Several of the answers also offer points for reflection. Father Thomas always liked to reflect further on things as he taught, and we hope readers will want to do the same as they read. Most of all we hope that many people will use and benefit from the revised edition of Father Thomas' wonderful gift to the Church, his series *The Orthodox Faith*.

Department of Christian Education  
Orthodox Church in America

## **Chapter 1: Sources of Christian Doctrine**

1. What prophecy does the prophet Isaiah make concerning the Messiah that has to do with Jesus Christ's title of Rabbi? (pp. 18-19)
2. What was the attitude of the Church Fathers toward pagan religions and various philosophers? (p. 21)
3. Do all things in the Church have eternal and lasting value? (p. 22)
4. What element comes first among those that make up Holy Tradition? (p. 23)
5. What is the primary meaning of the word *prophet*? (p. 24)
6. Why is the book of the Four Gospels, rather than the whole Bible, enthroned on the altar of every Orthodox Church? (p. 26)
7. How is the Liturgy of the New Testament Church a "christening" of the Old Testament liturgical life? (p. 26)
8. What is an *apologist*? (p. 30)
9. Why do the writings of the Church Fathers have authority in the Church? (p. 31)
10. What are some characteristics of the unusual group of saints known as *fools for Christ's sake*? (p. 33)
11. Are all canons unchangeable? (p. 35)
12. How is an icon different from a holy picture? (pp. 37-8)

## **Chapter 2: The Symbol of Faith**

1. What was probably the earliest Christian creed? (p. 40)
2. Why is the Symbol of Faith (the Creed) said in the first person, unlike other prayers? (p. 44)
3. Why would the Orthodox Church be reluctant to call God the Supreme Being? (p. 47)
4. Does the Orthodox Church teach that God created everything individually and all at once? (p. 50)
5. How is Psalm 139 related to the prayer *O Heavenly King*? (p. 51-2)
6. Why is it slightly incorrect to call all the bodiless powers angels? (p. 53)

7. In what way is our human destiny higher than that of the bodiless powers? (p. 57)
8. What limits our ability as human beings to become more and more Godlike? (p. 58)
9. How is the life of the Holy Trinity a Divine Pattern for the life of men and women in God's creation? (p. 61)
10. How are the words *eternity* and *now* related? (p. 66)
11. Is it correct to say that Jesus Christ's presence in our world begins when the Virgin Mary gives birth to Him? (pp. 71-2)
12. Why is the Virgin Birth necessary? (p. 73)
13. What truth was the Emperor Justinian putting forth in the hymn he wrote in the 6<sup>th</sup> century? (pp. 82-3)
14. What is the basic point made by the defenders of icon veneration? (p. 85)
15. What event is the "official" beginning of Jesus Christ's Messianic mission? (p. 89)
16. Why is our entrance into the life of the Church by baptism and chrismation called *holy illumination*? (p. 93)
17. How did Jesus Christ make death itself become "the source and the way into life eternal?" (p.98)
18. How do the words of the Old Testament prophet Ezekiel tell us what the Resurrection of Christ, and our own resurrected life, will be like? (p. 104)
19. What does Saint Gregory the Theologian's *Easter Oration* say is God's most precious possession? (p. 105)
20. How does Saint Gregory say the whole of creation is recreated? (p.105)
21. What does it mean to say that Jesus Christ, after His ascension, sat down at the right hand of God? (pp. 106, 108)
22. Why are human beings not told the exact time of "the end" of all things? (p. 108)
23. What are the "two different ways" in which God's love acts, according to Saint Isaac of Syria? (p. 110)
24. Who will be the Judge in the final judgment of human beings? (p. 112)

25. On what basis does the Orthodox Church disagree with the Protestant and Roman Catholic creedal statement that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son? (p. 116)
26. Father Hopko writes that the coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost is the fulfillment of one thing, and the beginning of another. What are these two things? (p. 118)
27. What does the word *catholic* mean? (p. 122)
28. How does I Timothy 3:15 describe the Church? (p. 124)
29. How does the Orthodox Church interpret 2 Peter 3: 10? (p. 129)

### **Chapter 3: The Holy Trinity**

1. How can we come to know God for ourselves in our own living union with Him? (p.133)
2. Is it correct to say that the Son and the Holy Spirit are “made from nothing”? (p. 134)
3. When we say that God is absolute perfection, we are saying *what* He is. How do we tell *who* He is? (p. 137)
4. How does the word *logical* relate to human beings and the Son of God? (p. 139)
5. How are human beings, alone among God’s creatures, empowered “to imitate God and to participate in His life”? (p. 139)

### **Chapter 4: The Bible**

1. When we call the Bible the written Word of God, what are two things we do not mean? (p. 148)
2. Why does the Church Tradition consider the identity of the Bible’s authors to be “incidental to the correct interpretation and proper significance” of the Biblical books? (p.150)

### **Chapter 5: Old Testament**

1. With what person is the Old Testament law essentially connected? (p. 157)
2. Were the historical books of the Old Testament written soon after the events they describe? (p. 161)
3. What does the word *apocalyptic* mean? (p. 167)
4. Why is the entire book of Jonah read at the Easter vigil of Great Saturday? (p. 168)

## **Chapter 6: New Testament**

1. In what way are the four Gospels more than biographies of Jesus Christ? (p. 172)
2. What does the Gospel of Matthew intend to show to Jewish Christians? (p. 174)
3. Why is it traditionally believed that the unnamed disciple on the road to Emmaus (in Luke 24:13-35) is Saint Luke? (p.175)
4. What title is given to the apostle and evangelist John? (p. 177)
5. What attitude toward the Old Testament Law of Moses does Saint Paul express in the Letter to the Romans? (p. 180)
6. What words in the Letter to the Philippians indicate the growing structure of the Church? (p. 187)
7. What is the main theme of the Letter to the Hebrews? (p. 194)
8. What does the second letter of Saint Peter teach about God's actions toward creation at the end of the world? (p. 198)
9. How does the Orthodox Church interpret the image of Babylon in the Book of Revelation? (p. 205)
10. What does Father Hopko say is the meaning of the 144,000 in Revelation 14: 3? (p. 206)

## **Chapter 7: Salvation History**

1. What does Romans 5: 14 say about the original Adam and the True Adam? (p. 210)
2. What event in Abraham's life prefigures the Holy Trinity? (p. 214)
3. What comparison does Jesus Christ make between Himself and the manna the Jews ate in the wilderness? (p. 218)
4. What does Saint Paul say about the rock struck by Moses during the exodus of the Jews from Egypt? (p. 219)
5. What event in the time of Jesus Christ, the Messiah, fulfills the giving of the law to Moses (p. 221)
6. How does Revelation 17:24 describe the Lamb? (p. 228)
7. The Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed, never to be rebuilt. What has now become God's temple, according to I Corinthians 3:16-17? (p. 235)

8. Hebrews 9:11-14 calls Jesus Christ the “high priest” who sacrifices “not the blood of goats and calves but His own blood.” What does His sacrifice achieve for us? (p. 236)
9. What public action of Jesus Christ makes the people call Him “the Prophet Who is come into the world”? (p. 239)
10. Why will prophecy cease in the Kingdom of God? (p. 242)
11. According to 2 Peter 1:3-4, what promise has been given, in and through Jesus Christ by means of the Holy Spirit, to all of us? (p. 247)