

14 Σεπτεμβρίου 2009

“These Truths We Hold” (Part VII)

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In the Church of St. Alexei, in the Chudov Monastery. Painting by Stepan Shukhovostov 1866.

Continued from (Part VI)

2. The Church Building and its Servers.

External Arrangement.

Orthodox churches generally take one of several shapes that have a particular mystical significance. The most common shape is an oblong or rectangular shape, imitating the form of a ship. As a ship, under the guidance of a master helmsman conveys men through the stormy seas to a calm harbor, so the Church, guided by Christ, carries men unharmed across the stormy seas of sin and strife to the peaceful haven of the Kingdom of Heaven. Churches are also frequently built in the form of a Cross to proclaim that we are saved through faith in the Crucified Christ, for Whom Christians are prepared to suffer all things. Less frequently churches are built in the shape of a circle, signifying that the Church of Christ shall exist for all eternity (the circle being one of the symbols of eternity) or in the shape of an octagon, signifying a star, for the Church, like a star, guides a man through the darkness of sin which encompasses him. Because of the difficulties of internal arrangement, however, the latter two shapes are not often used.

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