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# THE NARTHEX

The disciples were first called Christian in Antioch (Acts.11:26)

The Newsletter of St Dunstan's Antiochian Orthodox Church, Poole BH14 9JG. The Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of Great Britain and Ireland. Metropolitan Silouan. The Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East. Patriarch John X.

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## THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

The Bible is the Church's book. That is a loaded statement; it depends on how it is interpreted, so let us unload it. When using the word, Church, I am of, course, only referring to the one Orthodox-Catholic Church of Jesus Christ, of which the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East is a full part, in full communion with the other canonical Orthodox churches. And when using the word, Bible, I am referring to the canonical scriptures: the fifty books of the Old Testament, as found in the Septuagint (Greek) text, and the twenty-seven books of the Greek New Testament.

If we are to understand the position and importance of the Holy Scriptures in the Orthodox Church, it is necessary to begin with the concept of Holy Tradition. In turn, we mean by that, the fulness of the saving Faith and proclamation of the gospel (Gr. Kerygma) authorised by God the Holy Spirit and handed on by the Apostles. Holy Tradition includes the teaching of the Fathers, holy orders and episcopal ministries, the Liturgy of the Church, the Holy Canons governing the life of the churches, the dogmatic definitions of the Ecumenical Councils and the Nicene Creed and, moreover, the holy scriptures. The Bible *is a part* of Holy Tropicion. Roman Catholic teaching envisages scripture as parallel to Tradition, forming two teaching authorities that are held to work in harmony. Traditional Protestantism, on the other hand, has taken scripture as the *only* source of teaching and belief (*sola scriptura*), viewing their denominations as under scripture. This idea, emerging from the Reformation, is, of course, a reaction against historical developments in the Western Church that came to a crisis in the sixteenth century. Once Papalism was dropped, where else would the Reformers turn to for authoritative teaching?



What emerges from the Protestant approach to holy scripture is biblical fundamentalism: the idea that everything in the Bible is unerringly factual, literally, and historically. An example might be the naïve acceptance that the world was created in six periods of twenty-four hours. (It is interesting to read Blessed Augustine of Hippo on this.) As to the mental gymnastics needed to sustain this idea (and the conflict with modern Science) there is not space here to explore further. Furthermore, Fundamentalism ends up in affirming that God only exists because the Bible says He exists. Rather as the old evangelical hymn has it, *'Jesus loves me, this I know, 'for the Bible tells me so.'* Protestant fundamentalism is, of course, a religious movement outside the confines of the Orthodox-Catholic Church (though it has tried to 'invade' from time to time) and we might wonder what led to this approach, apart that is, from the disputes with the Roman Catholic Church. I suspect the roots lie in the western Crusaders' encounter

with Qur'an and the followers of Mohammad in the Holy Land. The latter, after all, believed that the *Recitation* (Qur'an) was directly communicated by an angel, without human intermediaries. (We would beg to differ, of course... Something similar emerges in the ludicrous story told about the origins of the Book of Mormon from America by the heretical 'Church of Latter-Day Saints.')

There is a doctoral thesis there, possibly, for some bright student who might wish to explore the influence of Islamic ideas on western Christian thought, following the Crusades. I believe it was the western Theologian, Thomas Aquinas, who first posited the idea that the Faith is actually *revealed* in the holy scriptures; that the book itself is the revelation the mystery. This, as a development of thought, must strike the Orthodox mind as rather odd. We need to be very clear on this point; the revelation is Christ Himself, incarnate as man; the revelation is a person, not a book. The Orthodox believer, unlike the fundamentalist Protestant, does not primarily require the book in order to come to faith, though it will help, of course. For us, the encounter with the revealed Christ is through the Church, which is His body, and which has His mind. The Bible for us, therefore, is the *record* of the revelation, not directly the Revealed itself.

And the Bible is precisely the record of our revealed faith because it holds the writings that the Church, filled with the grace of the Holy Spirit, decreed to be consonant with the proclamation and teaching of the apostles of Christ. Bearing this in mind, it is interesting to discover that there is argument over whether the Jews of Our Lord's own day had a sacred canon, as we understand the term; an agreed, authorised body of writings, including, of course, the Torah, the first five books of our Old Testament. The status of other Hebrew writings, psalms, histories, and prophetic books were matters of dispute, as witnessed in the antipathy between Pharisees and Sadducees and their differing interpretations of the sacred writings. It is possible that the Jews might have settled an agreed list of holy books between the 2nd century BC and the century 2<sup>nd</sup> AD, but scholars are not agreed on this matter. In fact, the Jews did not have a finally agreed written text (that is, one produced by scribes using the accepted vowel notations and marks together with the Hebrew consonants) until the beginning of the tenth century AD. Interestingly, it is this version (called the Masoretic text) that the Reformers accessed for their translations, hence the absence of eleven Old Testament books from the Protestant canon. The problem for Protestantism here, is that they are saying that for the first one-and-a-half millennia, the Church had an over-filled Bible and God did nothing about it! For the Orthodox, the authoritative Old Testament text is that of the Septuagint, a Greek translation made during the third to second centuries BC in Ptolomaic Egypt for the great library at Alexandria, and also for the Jewish diaspora, many of whom had even lost touch with Hebrew. The actual Jewish scriptures of today in fact divides into twenty-four books (the same books, numbered as thirty-nine books in the Protestant canon). But the fact that they do not have eleven books is really irrelevant to us: we accept the books that the Orthodox Church, guided by the Holy Spirit, has authorised and canonised; we are not dependant on Judaism here.

The Apostolic Church existed, and Orthodox Christianity was proclaimed and practised long before it was necessary to fix the biblical canon around the end of the fourth century AD. Historically, in fact, it would be more accurate to say that Orthodoxy has been reluctant to define, precisely, the content of the Old Testament, which has, at times, been fluid. In common with other Christians, we have twenty-seven books in the New Testament. In part, this was in defiance of the heretic, Marcion (2<sup>nd</sup> Cent AD) who refused to acknowledge the books that did not agree with his own opinions. The Book of the Apocalypse (Revelation) was only received late in the Eastern Church, whereas it was accepted earlier in the West and, as I have found out recently, came to influence the pre-Roman liturgy of the West, the rites of the Gallican, Spanish and British churches, in matters of liturgical text, iconography and church design.

As I said at the beginning, the Bible is the Church's book, the inspired words of God, proclaiming in both Old and New testaments, the Word of God, the second person of the Trinity. What is found within is there through the collective wisdom the Orthodox Church, as the Holy Spirit has given her authority. We read the Old Testament as prefiguring the New, for God the LORD of the Old Testament is Christ (see Lk. 24:44-48) and we read the New as fulfilling the Old (see, for example, Matt. 2:5-6). As such, it can only be interpreted according to Holy Tradition, especially as received from their Fathers; it is not for personal, individual interpretation and cannot, legitimately, be just taken and used as divine authority to establish one's own church, separate from Orthodoxy. The gospels, in particular, are greatly venerated among us. The gospel book (containing the liturgical gospel passages) is finely bound and is lodged on the Holy Table of an Orthodox church. It is, as such, the principal icon of Christ in the temple, venerated in the same way as we do the holy images and a sign of His presence among us. Glory to Thee, O Lord, glory to Thee!

*Fr Chrysostom*

## Some Simple Housekeeping Notices.

It would be good if ladies refrained from wearing shoes with pointed heels. These damage the floor which we just have restored at great cost.

There are absorbent mats at both the West door and the South door. Please use them when it is wet outside. Water damages the floor too. Wet umbrellas are to be left by the doors.

Please do not leave toddlers to run around the church unsupervised. It can be very disruptive, and they could hurt themselves on the many sharp surfaces (candlestands, the base of the stone baptism font). Our insurance does not cover such accidents. Please try to keep them within a couple of metres of yourself. We realise that the large space of the church encourages toddlers to enjoy every inch of it, and some get a little bit giddy with so much space, but a little bit of discipline would be good.

**CRYING BABIES ARE NOT A PROBLEM.** The saying in the Orthodox Church is "If you have no crying babies in your church, your church is dying". If a child needs calming down, please take it into the Chapel of All British Saints (entrance to the left of the altar). There is no need to take them outside in bad weather. Should you wish to breastfeed in a private space, that is also an ideal location. We are trying to get a folding baby-changing table in the large toilet next to the kitchenette but will need a sponsor for this.

Please respect the doorkeepers, Presbytera Annemieke and the Stewards Christiana and George. If they find it necessary to ask you to do something they have a very good reason for doing so.

Babies in prams are more than welcome in the church, but please do not stay just in the Narthex (the back of the church behind the first two pillars). It hinders other people coming in. The actual body of the church proper is in front of the West pillars and the benches/pews. It also is not in front of the fridge and freezer by the South door. Huddling behind the benches by the War Memorial is NOT being in the church proper. We have 780 m<sup>2</sup> of floor space, which is more than enough for our average attendance of about 130 – 150 people. Last Pascha we had 3,000 people attending, and there still was space to move around.

We have a Sunday School (*Followers*) which unfortunately has quite low attendance. In order for your child to benefit from this, you must be present before the reading of the Epistle and Gospel. All children standing in front of the altar steps during the reading of the Gospel can take part in the Sunday School, which is run by two qualified teachers with full DBS in two separate rooms depending on age group.

If you should have (private) or notice a safeguarding issue (violence etc.), please inform the Priests and/or their wives. Of course, there is total privacy. We have strict protocols and rules regarding safeguarding issues, whether the matter concerns adults or children. The priests and our Safeguarding Officer Presbytera Olympias (Mo) can help you.

Be considerate when using the car park. **IT IS NOT ALLOWED TO PARK IN THE ENTRANCE GATE.** This could cause an ambulance not being able to enter the car park in an emergency.



"Hey! — I thought we were going to make our *own* rules!"

Parts of the Old Testament with which all Orthodox Christians should be familiar

GENESIS

Creation	1:1-2:3	The Manna	16:11-16	The Servant	49:1-7
Eden	2:1-25	Moses and God	19:10-25	Redemption	52:7-1
The Fall	3:1-24	Ten Commandments	20:1-21	Suffering Servant	53:1-12
Noah	6:3-22; 7:7-24;	The Tabernacle	40:17-35	God's Glory	60:1-20
	8:5-21	NUMBERS		Good News	61:1-3
Babel	11:1-9	Bronze Serpent	21:4-9	The Redeemer	63:1-6
Call of Abraham	12:1-9	DEUTERONOMY		EZEKIEL	
Sign of the Covenant	17:1-27	Death of Moses	34:1-9	Dry Bones	37:1-14
Sarah's child	18:1-15	1 KINGDOMS (1 SAMUEL)		The Temple	44:1-5
Isaac born	21:1-7	Call of Samuel	3:1-21	DANIEL	
Abraham tested	22:1-19	David anointed	16:1-13	The End	12:1-13
Jacob blessed	27:1-41	3 KINGDOMS (1 KINGS)		MALACHI	
Jacob at Bethel	28:10-22	The Temple	5:1-7	The Messenger	3:1-3
Joseph	37:1-36	The Ark	8:1-30		
Joseph's Brothers	45:3-28	4 KINGDOMS (2 KINGS)			
Death of Joseph	50:22-26	The Exile	25:1-11		
EXODUS		JOB			
Israel enslaved	1:8-14	Job attacked	2:1-10		
Moses born	2:1-3:16	Job Restored	42:1-16		
Passover	12:1-32	ISAIAH			
The Red Sea	14:1-29	Promised Light	9:1-7		

*'The treasure hid in the scriptures is Christ since He was pointed out by means of types and parables.*

St Irenaeus of Lyons, Adversus Haereses IV

SERVICES

Vespers is served on Saturday 5.00pm (Please enter by the side door). Fr Chrysostom is available for Confession afterwards or by appointment. Fr Filip is available for Confession by appointment. Orthros is served before the Divine Liturgy on Sundays at 8.45am

MAY

Sun 7 <sup>th</sup>	Fourth Sunday of Pascha	The Paralysed Man
	Divine Liturgy 10.30am	
Sun 14 <sup>th</sup>	Fifth Sunday of Pascha	The Samaritan Woman
	Divine Liturgy 10.30am	
Sun 11 <sup>th</sup>	Sixth Sunday of Pascha	The Blind Man
	Divine Liturgy 10.30am	
Thurs 25 <sup>th</sup>	The Ascension of Our Lord (service time to be announced)	
Sun 28 <sup>th</sup>	Seventh Sunday of Pascha	Fathers of the First ecumenical Council
	Divine Liturgy 10.30am	

JUNE

Thurs 1 <sup>st</sup>	Feast of St Wite, Patroness of Dorset	
Sun 4 <sup>th</sup>	HOLY PENTECOST Divine Liturgy 10.30am	
Sun 11 <sup>th</sup>	First after Pentecost	Sunday of All Saints
	Divine Liturgy 10.30am	
Mon 12 <sup>th</sup>	Beginning of the Apostles' Fast	
Sun 18 <sup>th</sup>	Second after Pentecost	All Saints of Britain
	Divine Liturgy 10.30am	
Sun 25 <sup>th</sup>	Third after Pentecost	All Saints of Antioch
	Divine Liturgy 10.30am	
Thurs 29 <sup>th</sup>	Holy Apostles Peter & Paul	