

THE NARTHEX

November-December 2018
'And the disciples were first called
Christians in Antioch' (Acts 11:26)

The Orthodox Church of St Dunstan of Canterbury, Parkstone, Poole, Dorset BH14 9JG

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The Likeness of God

If for some strange reason you ever find yourself taking up the study of Moral Philosophy, *Ethics*, you should come across two terms; technical jargon, really: Deontology and Consequentialism. No, I agree: they don't exactly flow off the tongue, do they! The first is the idea that the right thing to do in any situation is laid down in a clear set of rules: *do this/don't do this*, and you'll be fine. The famous Ten Commandments are a good example of this approach. The second term, as its name implies looks, rather, at the consequences, the outcome, of our actions.

The strict following of the rules, of course, leaves little wiggle-room. I can't see when it's ever right to covet, but what about stealing when your family is starving? As for looking to the consequences, there's always that awkward law of unforeseen consequences; how can we predict all the effects of our actions?

Fortunately, the Orthodox Christian religion is not an ethical theory; we are not tied to any particular philosophy, imposed from outside on our faith. We believe in Christianity, not '*Christianism*.' Yet, for many who adhere to Christianity, their ideas of what constitutes moral behaviour is still rooted in either Deontology or Consequentialism. I have often noticed this in hearing people's confessions, when they stand before the Holy Gospels and present what amounts to a 'charge sheet,' as if they stood in the dock, where their crimes are being examined forensically.

It is true, of course, that Our Lord spoke a great deal about the Commandments that are found in the Torah of the Old Testament, at one time criticising the Scribes and Pharisees for having changed the purpose of the Commandments by inserting their own, later traditions and interpretations [see: Mk.1:13]. At another time, he interrogates a rich young ruler over the commandments he has kept and yet, strangely to some minds, the keeping of the rules is not enough for Christ and the young man departs, disappointed. [Lk18:18-27]

If we look at Christ's teaching as recorded in the Sermon on the Mount

[Matt.5:1-7:29] and the Sermon on the Plain [Lk.6:17-49] His way of approaching life is a radically different one from the way of Moses. Those 613 Commandments in the Old Testament represented the special vocation of the children of Israel. For them it was the way of choosing Life, life in this world and the blessings of this world [Deut.30:19] but they were not the end or final revelation of the Truth. When in St John's gospel we read of the woman taken in adultery [Jn.8:3-11] the commandment in the Torah is clear. How does Christ deal with this: by bending forward and writing in the sand. Sin brings death, indeed! But who is entirely sinless so as to carry this to its conclusion without hypocrisy?

Of course Christ gave commandments to His disciples: how they were to love God and to love one another. Indeed, how they were to serve the liturgy as his remembrance, until he come and, indeed, how we are to live:

- As you wish that men would do to you, do so to them
- Love your enemies
- Do good
- Lend, expecting nothing in return
- Be merciful

So how should we understand these commandments? By doing these things shall we be *earning* a place in heaven, as if acquiring capital in some celestial bank account? (Deontology, surely?) Or will the result be that we shall have a happier world to live in, with all that love and good will sloshing around? (doubtless, that is Consequentialism). The truth is, this is not about *us*. This teaching from Christ is about God Himself, '*for He is kind to the unthankful and the evil.*' [Lk.6:35]

In other words, we are in Christ not to follow a particular ethical path - for whatever reason - but to prove that we are children of God; to demonstrate, by what we think and say and do, that we are reflecting exactly *who* our Father is. '*But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High.* Yes, indeed, your

reward will be great, but not because God owes you some debt because of *your* goodness, but because you will have found your destiny; you will have recovered your full humanity in the image and likeness of God, in other words *Theosis*; in other words, salvation. Virtue, here, is indeed its own reward.

Think of the story of the Fall of Adam and Eve. On the surface it appears that they are punished for breaking one rule and, as a result, all humanity bears their guilt for offending God. This is an idea that has infected western Christianity, especially Evangelical Protestantism. It is not, though, the understanding of the Church Fathers or the Orthodox Church. The sin of Adam is not a crime entailing punishment, but the symptom of a disease requiring a cure. His disobedience is a denial, or a refusal, of his love for God. And it is the nature of Adam that we share, not his guilt. Let us ask ourselves, when we were children did we follow the fifth commandment and honour our parents? Did we obey them? Why? was it from fear of punishment or was it through love and respect? Which reason would reflect better to our credit, love or fear?

Sin, that is, 'missing the target,' is not a moral lapse or failure to keep a set of rules. It is rather the failure to live in love and communion with God. We fall every time we assert our independence from God and imagine that we can be self-sufficient, seeking what we think will make us happy. But separation from God is alienation from the source of our being, our true created nature and our eternal life in God. It is Death.

Most, if not all of us, tried to assert our independence from our own parents during our adolescence at some time or other.

Indeed, it is necessary stage on our journey to maturity; part of our formation as individuals. And hopefully we emerged eventually to re-establish a complete and sound

relationship with those who brought us into this world.

But our Orthodox Faith teaches us that such psychological and social growth is not sufficient. Our spiritual growth, Life as communion with the Trinity, is the true end and goal of all our searchings, which surpasses ethics and all human systems of morality. The point of our coming to confession is Repentance; the whole purpose of receiving the Holy Mysteries is Grace. We stand not on our own righteousness but in the goodness of God. How many times have we seen a new born baby and heard, 'He's just like his father.' Does the world see the same in us Christians; are we like Our Father, do we reflect Him? Perhaps, in the end, the world's opinion does not matter very much. But what will matter at The Judgement is that Our Heavenly Father will recognise us as His own, for we have become like Him.

Fr Chrysostom



An Archdiocesan Prayer Book

At the Archdiocesan Conference in May, Fr Samuel Carter (Stoke on Trent) and Fr Chrysostom were commissioned to produce a simple prayer book (in Traditional English) for use by anyone in our archdiocese. The work on the book is now complete, save any last minute adjustments. It has, of course, received the blessing of Metropolitan Silouan.

This short manual of prayers and other devotions are drawn from a variety of Antiochian and other Orthodox Christian sources, and are intended for use by our congregations, whether at home or away, alone or with family or friends.

It is possible that the costs of production of this small, paperback book will be bourn mostly by the archdiocese or by individual parishes; it is even possible that it might be issued free of charge under certain circumstances. The aim is, of course, is to encourage people to share daily in the continuous prayer of the Church. Indeed, the disciplined and regular use of forms of prayer that have themselves become part of Holy Tradition, helps to form within our souls the mind of Christ and establish us in the Orthodox way.

Currently, we are awaiting various publishing houses (who might hold copyright over certain translations) to grant us permission to proceed with production.



The prayer book will be called *The Saint Theodore Prayer Book*, named after the patron saint of our archdiocese. Theodore of Tarsus (602-690) (Patriarchate of Antioch) was a Greek monk who became Archbishop of Canterbury, famous for his reorganisation and administration of the Church in England.

Remembrance

A concert of music for choir and solo cello

Commemorating the End of the First World War

The Bournemouth Sinfonietta Choir is to give a special remembrance concert, together with cellist Lionel Handy, at St Dunstan's Orthodox Church in Parkstone on Saturday 3rd November 2018 at 7.30pm. We very much hope that as many members of the congregation as possible will be able to attend.

The central work, *Voices of Vimy*, is a haunting new piece for solo cello and choir which commemorates the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge on 9 April 1917, when largely Canadian forces succeeded in capturing the ridge where previous attacks had failed. The work is unusual in having two composers Tom Harrold (British) and Stuart Beatch (Canadian), both in their 20s like many in the trenches.



The Choir chairman, Nigel Wyatt, commented, "We are delighted that, in a change to the programme, the internationally acclaimed cellist Lionel Handy will be joining us for this special occasion in the wonderful acoustic of St Dunstan's Orthodox Church. The combination of solo cello and unaccompanied choir is so rich and full of possibilities."

The programme will also include the well-known *Benedictus* from *The Armed Man: A Mass for Peace* by Karl Jenkins, now firmly established as a classic in its own right, as we mark the ending of the First World War.

The programme will also include two well-known motets by William Harris. *Faire is the Heaven* dating from 1925, as the country recovered from the horrors of the First World War, and the later *Bring us, O Lord God*. Tickets (£14, £2 under 18) available from the choir website and at the door.

Programme

A concert of music for choir and solo cello will include:

<i>Benedictus</i>	Jenkins
<i>Faire is the Heaven</i>	Harris
<i>Bring us, O Lord God</i>	Harris
<i>Voices of Vimy</i>	Harrold & Beatch

Cello, Lionel Handy

SERVICES

Vespers is normally served on Saturdays at 5.00pm and on Wednesdays at 6.00pm. Fr. Chrysostom is available for Confession afterwards or by appointment. **Orthros** is served before the Divine Liturgy on Sundays at 9.00am

November

Sat 3 Bournemouth Sinfonietta Concert 7.30pm
 Sun 4th 23rd after Pentecost Divine Liturgy 10.30am
 Sat 10 Parish Committee 3.30pm
 Sun 11th 24th after Pentecost Divine Liturgy 10.30am
 Remembrance Sunday. Act of Remembrance before the Liturgy
 Thurs 15th **Beginning of the Nativity Fast**
 Sun 18th 25th after Pentecost Divine Liturgy 10.30am
 Wed 21st ENTRY OF THE THEOTOKOS



(Service time to be announced)
 Sun 25th 26th after Pentecost Divine Liturgy 10.30am

December

Sun 2nd 27th after Pentecost Divine Liturgy 10.30am
 Sun 9th 28th after Pentecost Conception of the Theotokos Divine Liturgy 10.30am
 Sun 16th 29th after Pentecost Sunday of the Holy Forefathers Divine Liturgy 10.30am
 Sun 23rd 30th after Pentecost Divine Liturgy 10.30am Sunday before Nativity
 Mon 24th Eve of Nativity Royal Hours 10.00am Vespers 6.00pm
 Tuesday 25th THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD Divine Liturgy 9.30am
 Sun 30th 31st after Pentecost Sunday after Nativity Divine Liturgy 10.30am

