

# THE NARTHEX

September - October 2020  
'And the disciples were first called  
Christians in Antioch' (Acts 11:26)

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## Thinking Backward and Forward

When learning about any subject there is a process through which one passes, in order to achieve any kind of mastery. There is a taxonomy, or classification, of the stages that the student can achieve. So, for example, progress will go through: 1] basic factual knowledge; 2] comprehension and the ability to explain; 3] analysis, categorisation and comparing; 4] evaluation and prioritising; and finally, 5] synthesis, creation, composing and invention.

The ancient Greek philosophers approached the world, and all the phenomena around them, through this structured method. Indeed, their analytical, dissecting approach is the very foundation of what we know as Science.

Here is an example of what I mean. Stage 1, it is always difficult to pull objects along the ground (fact). Stage 2, the cause of this is friction when things rub together (comprehension). Stage 3, curved objects have less friction than flat ones (analysis). Stage 4, rounded objects are preferred, being easier to use than straight ones (evaluation). And finally, 5, you produce an entirely round object (synthesis) and lo, you have invented the wheel!

Although it is odd that the ancient peoples of the Americas never discovered the use of wheels, technological development has marked a certain kind of progress in humanity, accelerating particularly since the industrial revolution, and exponentially since this electronic revolution, in which we currently find ourselves.

This analysing and synthesising approach to the world is the outstanding feature of the human being; something of which we are capable because of the size of our brain. It is also this scientific approach that, in examining the structures and processes that make our world, and even the cosmos, function, that produces scientific theory. Science, of course, appears always to be moving on, yet establishing an actual theory still involves a hypothesis (suggested explanation); experimentation to prove the case; repetition of the experiment by others to produce the same result and thus

verifying the original idea as a theory. (People often say, erroneously, *it's only a theory*: clearly, they have not understood the process.) This structural method of approach to the world essentially works backwards, unpicking and dissecting what is currently there. *The Theory of Evolution of Species* is a good case in point. This amounts to a *Worldview*, a way of appreciating what is going on and why things are the way they are. It is an *a posteriori* approach, that is, working back from the effect to the cause. For example, we observe what seem to be global temperature rises, and the cause suggested is, human industrial activity.

In contrast to this approach, it is often thought that the religious mind (and particularly the Orthodox Christian mind) works forward, an *a priori* approach, starting with the cause and then understanding the effect. For example, Adam sinned in his primal state in Paradise, the result being that Death has entered Creation.

These are both, of course *Worldviews* and, in one sense, are both functions of the human brain. They have, from time to time (beginning from the sixteenth century) appeared to be in conflict, though I do not necessarily believe that they should be. At other times, the pursuits of Science and Religion have been integrated (as Science often was with the Arts, although those two have now drifted apart). In the past, members of the clergy were often at the forefront of Science in this country. They have, at times, interacted, offering each other particular insights, especially in the area of ethical behaviour in the application of discoveries. And indeed, science and religion have often operated independently of one another, offering contrasting yet complimentary ways of understanding the universe; two approaches that, quite interestingly, may be found in the same mind at the same time. To illustrate what I mean, think of any famous painting. Is it the creation of an artist, or is it a process that involved paint? We can know the origin of the paints used for the painting, made from natural pigments found in rocks and other sources. We can discover how the canvas was made and the optical laws that govern perspective, form, and

composition. These are indeed the conditions and contingencies of the finished article, but who is the creator of the painting? Which approach is correct? Do we analyse a painting in order to go back to the formation of an object, or go forward from the artist himself to the resultant painting? The answer is, of course, both are possible.

So, the religious mind, and especially the Orthodox Christian mind, is a way of perception with clear paradigms; what we call the mind of Christ. And, unlike the scientific approach (which is in no way illegitimate) the Orthodox mind is founded on the idea of revelation, of understanding, not through experiment and conjecture, but by enlightenment from God. The very function of this approach is also a contrast, for its purpose is not the exploitation or control of the natural world, but the redemption and elevation of the Creation, along with the salvation of Mankind through communion with God, something beyond the competence of Science. In other words, the different purposes require different ways of thinking, whether scientific or religious.

Taking our cue from Biblical and Patristic Christianity, we do not see the structural, relational and existential cosmos of the Greek philosophers, but the iconic Creation of God; that is, a universe of creatures, bearing the image of the Creator and, therefore, revealing the divine. All things in creation have the divine seal, bearing the Logos (Word) of God within them, although only Mankind is the ultimate image, made in the likeness of God. We confess in the Creed our belief in the Father, *Creator of heaven and earth*, and in the Son of God, *by whom all things were made*. Being created, it is His image that we bear and that, because of the disruption in our relationship to God caused by Sin, the same Son entered the creation, becoming Man, in order to redeem and offer the Creation back to the Creator. This economy of salvation is a great *Liturgy*, the work, the ultimate act of

worship, proclaimed in the gospels in the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Christ. It is the very same mystery of the faith that is offered up in the Divine Liturgy, served by the Church.

Science, of course, is competent to analyse and discuss the body, including the biological and chemical functioning of the brain. But before the soul it can only remain silent, dumb as a fish, for it can know nothing of the soul.

We, however, must be careful here. Man is not a duality of body, as opposed to the soul, as the philosopher, Descartes thought. His famous dictum, I think, therefore I am, suggests that the mind (soul) must be real because we experience our conscious self by thought; the thought is really happening in someone who exists. For him, this existence happens to be in the current, physical body, which is quite a separate thing.

By contrast, in Orthodox Christian thinking Man is integral, a union of body and soul. For the ancient Gnostics, body and soul were of different natures that are in opposition to one another. It is true, that St Paul speaks of the flesh being in conflict with the spirit [Rom.8:5-9] but he is using the term, flesh, not as referring to the physical body, but to the fallen and perverted appetites of the old Adam that are in all of us now. For Paul, even the soul can be of the flesh. Rather, the union of body and soul within each of us is the image of Man; it does not represent and symbolise just one, but both, body and soul. More wonderfully, the image of Man is the image of God, Christ's image in every human being, and therefore, all can, potentially, be saved. For us, the person is not created by the structures and relationships of this world, but quite the opposite: it is the image of God within that creates all relationships and generates the structures around us. We have the right to life and human life is sacred, not because of the pronouncements of certain Enlightenment-period thinkers, but because we bear the image of God, the source of all holiness.

During the past two hundred to three hundred years, certain people, occupying positions of authority within the scientific world, have mocked as simpletons those who clung to belief in God. Society in general often takes time to catch up with scientific thinking, but now Science, or more properly, Scientism, has taken the place of Religion as the only voice of authoritative knowledge in western societies. Using Mathematics, science is perceived as logical and must always be right; It is indeed so in its structural and descriptive analysis of natural phenomena. The problems come with its application: witness the conflicting science that was so often bandied about in

(ironically) primitive magical thinking still plays a large role in the general human intellect, and often even among scientists themselves. The spiritual problem is not that man descended from the animals, as in Darwinian Theory, but rather that we end up as bestial.

In other words, the revelation that faith has received is different. We might indeed understand, scientifically, that our physical biology has been shown to have descended from earlier primates. But revealed faith teaches us that we are also psycho-somatic creatures; we are body and soul. Animals are only somatic, they are bodies alone, sentient creatures, worthy of our care, but they do not possess eternal souls. What really matters is not that we concentrate the mind on our likeness to animals. We turn our attention, instead, to the knowledge that we are, indeed, created in God's image, and thence to the possibility of recovering the likeness of God.

Fr Chrysostom



#### Helping as our Christian Service

We all know that helping others, as a charitable act, is part of our Orthodox beliefs. Well, now is the time for more of us to show what they can do.

Since last Autumn, our church building has experienced some problems which all had one single cause: not enough maintenance. As we continue to restore the building, starting with the roofs and the initial cleaning of the walls and ceilings, we must make sure that the rest of the building does not suffer other damages.

Until now, maintenance tasks have been carried out by a small number of very diligent volunteers, but as they advance in age it is only fair that we look to other, younger members of the congregation to help.

A maintenance plan has been established, together with our architects, but this plan must now be carried out. This means that every month some small tasks must be performed, in accordance with the plan, and signed off in the maintenance book. Not all maintenance is done at once, there must be continuity, and certain seasons are better than others for some of the work. It would be *extremely disappointing* if we could not put together a small team with knowledge of simple maintenance tasks.

These do not have to be men; ladies are just as welcome! We know that there are many among you who have the necessary knowledge of DIY, or of simple technical matters, to help keep the building in good condition.

Please talk to Fr Filip for more information and to volunteer, he oversees the maintenance plan and is responsible for the Health & Safety matters involved.

#### Update on works:

The first stage of roof works is coming to an end. Completion is planned for the 28 August, although there might be a slight delay if the weather turns to rain. This will mean that the worst leaks will have been mended, and that we will have spent over £200,000 on the planning and execution of these repairs. The repairs include the repointing of and replacing bricks in all the low walls between and around roofs, as well as placing new custom-made coping stones on these low walls, new lead being placed, and battens, counter battens, felt, and pantiles being replaced or cleaned and reused.

This does not mean that all the roofs are fixed, only the worst parts are now safe and good to go for many years. What it does mean is that we now must start raising more funds to repair the remaining roofs, for instance the roof over the ambulatory (the walkway around the altar outside the railings), and two more roofs over the north aisle.

Another matter which we must attend to as soon as possible is repairs to the two large windows below the blue and orange rosette window in the south aisle. Planning for this work is well advanced, but a formal application for funding from the NLHF is not possible until after October 2020 due to the virus panic.

#### War Memorial

A terrible rainstorm in July caused more damage to the War Memorial, on top of the damage done in previous years by a slow leak in the roof. This part of the roof has been repaired, and we must now make sure that the memorial is thoroughly dry before any conservation work can be carried out. An accredited conservator has made an initial inspection and has advised removal of the blue carpet and some slats in the base to allow airflow at the back of the memorial. Yes, it will look terrible for a while, but after drying out and conservation work being carried out it will look more splendid than ever!

The inscription at the bottom, "*Vicit Leo de tribu Juda*", comes from a short prayer also known as The Motto of St Anthony, sometimes used by Christians to overcome temptations. In Latin: "*Ecce Crucem Domini! Fugite partes adversae! Vicit Leo de tribu Juda, Radix David! Alleluia!*" Translated, it reads: "*Behold, the Cross of the Lord! Begone, all evil powers! The Lion of the tribe of Judah, The Root of David, has conquered! Alleluia!*"



#### SERVICES

*Vespers* is normally served on Saturdays at 5.00pm (Please enter by the side door)

Fr. Chrysostom is available for Confession afterwards or by appointment.

*Orthros* is served before the Divine Liturgy on Sundays at 8.45am

#### September

- Sun 6th 13th after Pentecost  
Divine Liturgy 10.30am
- Tues 8th Nativity of the  
Theotokos
- Sun 13th 14th after Pentecost  
Sunday before Exaltation of the Cross  
Divine Liturgy 10.30am
- Mon 14th Exaltation of the Cross



- Sun 20th 15th after Pentecost  
Sunday after the Exaltation of the  
Cross Divine Liturgy 10.30am
- Sun 27th 16th after Pentecost  
(Luke 1) Divine Liturgy 10.30am

#### October

- Sun 4th 17th after Pentecost  
Divine Liturgy 10.30am
- Sun 11th 18th after Pentecost  
Fathers of the 7th ecumenical Council  
Divine Liturgy 10.30am
- Sun 18th 19th after Pentecost  
Holy Apostle & Evangelist Luke  
Divine Liturgy 10.30am
- Sun 25th 20th after Pentecost  
Divine Liturgy 10.30am