



St John's Church News No 66: February 2015

**ЦЕРКОВЬ СВТ. ИОАННА ШАНХАЙСКОГО
ST JOHN'S RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH
Military Road, Colchester, Essex CO1 2AN**

His Holiness Kyrill, Patriarch of Moscow and All the Russias
Most Rev. Metropolitan Hilarion, First Hierarch of ROCOR
Very Rev. Mark, Archbp of Berlin, Germany and Great Britain

For this newsletter in electronic form: www.orthodoxengland.org.uk/zchurchnews.htm

Исповедь / Confession and Contact: о. Андрей / Fr Andrew: **T:** 01394 273820 /

E: frandrew_anglorus@yahoo.co.uk / **W:** www.orthodoxengland.org.uk

Русская и Украинская Школа / Russian and Ukrainian School: Sophia Bown:
safi@mail.ru

Воскресная Школа / Sunday School: Mary Kisliakova: mary0170@yahoo.com

Сторож / Caretaker: Paul Hopkins, 69, Military Road

Youtube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rE2T2sYTy8s>

Расписание богослужений / Services in February

Sunday 1 February: The Publican and the Pharisee / Мытарь и Фарисей

10.00 am: Hours and Divine Liturgy / Часы и Божественная литургия

Saturday 7 February

5.30 pm: Vigil / Всенощное бдение

Sunday 8 February: The Prodigal Son / Блудный сын / The Holy New Martyrs and Confessors / Память святых новомучеников и исповедников российских

10.00 Hours and Liturgy / Часы и Божественная литургия

Saturday 14 February

Vigil / Всенощное бдение

Sunday 15 February: Sunday of the Last Judgement / Неделя о Страшном суде.

Meatfare Sunday / Масленица / The Meeting of the Lord / Сретение Господне

10.00 am: Hours and Divine Liturgy / Часы и Божественная литургия

Saturday 21 February

5.30 pm: Vigil / Всенощное бдение

Sunday 22 February: Прощенное воскресенье / Sunday of Forgiveness. Cheesefare /

Сыропуст

10.00 am: Hours and Divine Liturgy followed by Vespers of Forgiveness / Часы и Божественная литургия с вечерней

Monday 23 February: Clean Monday: Чистый понедельник

Beginning of the Great Fast / Начало Великого поста

Saturday 28 February

5.30 pm: Vigil / Всенощное бдение

Dates for Your Diary

Важные Даты на Следующий Год

Easter: Sunday 12 April

Пасха: Воскресенье 12 апреля

Patronal Feast: Saturday 4 July

Престольный праздник: Суббота 4 июля

Baptisms in January 2015

3/1: Maxim Koukoleva-Lincoln

7/1: Emilia Lisauskaite

7/1: Viktorija Lisauskaite

CHURCH NEWS

Baptisms 2014

In 2014 there were 49 baptisms, 4 weddings and 0 funerals.

Christmas

There were about 100 people present at the Christmas Service on Wednesday 7th, which is quite good for a weekday. Another 130 came on the Sunday afterwards and the children performed their Nativity play in the Church around the icon of Christ. Given that our Hall is relatively small, the Nativity play will take place in the Church every year. We are very grateful to Father Christmas, who suddenly appeared in the Hall after the Nativity play and gave the children presents!

Money for Donetsk Orphans

On the evening of 17 January a dinner was held in the Church Hall to raise money for the orphans of Donetsk. Thanks to the hard work of Olga Igumnova £150 was raised for them and also a gift of £50 was made to the Church. Thank you, Olga!

Thirtieth Anniversary

In January Fr Andrew celebrated the thirtieth anniversary of his ordination to serve at the altar.

Христос рождается! Земля изменяется!

Сын Божий и Слово воплощается! Плоть преобразуется!

Многократно человек брался за обновление земли, за перестройку общества, за переделку и самого человека. Все эти попытки не только оказались тщетными, но в силу греховности своей человек и человечество погружались все глубже во тьму своего падшего состояния. Однако Бог неустанно подавал человеку Свою крепкую руку, вызволяя его, и вновь указывая на пути веры и верности.

Наконец Сам Бог родился на земле. Он родился как человек. Как Богочеловек. Неслыханное чудо: совершенный Бог стал одновременно также совершенным человеком. Совершая это чудо, Он не гнушается ни убогого убежища среди скота, ни пастухов, приносящих первыми Ему поклонение. В лице Богочеловека-Христа, наконец, появляется на земле единственное истинно новое под солнцем. Первый и единственный совершенный человек – человек без греха, без зла, без лжи, а главное: без последствия всех этих бед: человек без смерти.

Всемогущий Бог, став человеком, принес на землю все Свои божественные совершенства. Он открыл человеку Свои неограниченные пространства. Необъемлемый Бог, вместившись в девственной утробе, открывает человечеству все богатство Своего Божества. Этим Он явил, что человек только тогда человек, когда он всем своим существом соединен с Богом. А это значит: когда он весь живет Богом, чувствует Богом, мыслит Богом, действует Богом. Тогда человек из смертного бренного существа делается бессмертным, вечным, исполненным Божиими силами, благодатью, добродетелью, вечностью.

Ангелы Божии привели неученых пастухов в Вифлеем, и они припали к яслям от имени всего человечества. Ангелы Божии привели сюда мудрецов с востока, и они принесли дары трисветлые новому Царю всего человечества. Ангелы пришли в сиянии славы воспеть и открыть человеческому роду поклонение всех небесных сил Единому Всевышнему, снисшедшему на землю. Пришел Он Сам, отдать Себя бессмертного в нашу смерть и, победив, приобрести все человечество. Являются ангелы, приходят пастухи и мудрецы, потому что малый, ничтожный городок Вифлеем уже средоточие всецелого небесно-земного поклонения и стремительного движения всего творения к внутреннему средоточию мироздания – к Творцу. Сюда устремлены эти богоискатели мира. Они искали вечного Бога и находят новорожденного младенца, в пеленах повитого. Бог и человек соединены в Христе-Богочеловеке. В лице Вифлеемских пастухов и восточных мудрецов соединены евреи и язычники, соединены все посвященные Христу народы, принявшие проповедь апостольскую, все хранящие ее.

Но против этой благой вести всегда восставали ироды. И в наше время ироды стремятся разрушить это вышеестественное единство верующих во Христа и живущих во Христе.

В эти всерадостные светлые дни, когда мы празднуем вочеловечение Бога на земле, нам следует особенно молиться о восстановлении мира на земле. Мир этот возвещен нам земнородным – Ангелами. Ангелы призывают нас объединиться и искать всей своей жизнью свет Истины, Солнце Правды, Христа, принявшего все наше человеческое, и

тело, и душу, чтобы верностью Своей освятить их и обожить! Апостол восклицает *все вы — сыны света и сыны дня* (1 Сол 5, 5).

Покаемся же в своих грехах. Отвратимся от их тьмы. Сознаем, что любой и малейший грех нас уже омрачает, разъединяет, отторгает от Бога и от ближнего. Будем искать в наших сердцах, как в самом убогом вертепе, тот уголок, где уже родился и покоится Бог, не гнушающийся нас, но желающий весь воплотиться в нас, просветить, принести нам Свой глубокий мир, Свою любовь, Свою Истину и Правду, Свою вечность! Христосъ раждается, славите!

+Марк, архиепископ Берлинский и Германский, Мюнхен-Берлин декабрь 2014 г.

Christ is Born! The Earth is Changed!

The Son of God and Word is made incarnate! Human nature is transfigured!

So very often people have attempted to renew the earth, rebuild society and remake man himself. All these efforts have not only proved to be vain, but, on account of our sinfulness, people have entered ever more deeply into the darkness of our fallen condition. However, God constantly offered humanity His mighty hand, calling it forth, delivering it and once more showing it the path of faith and faithfulness.

Finally God Himself was born on earth. He was born as a man. As the God-man. This was an unheard-of miracle: the perfect God became at one and the same time perfect man. In performing this miracle, God spurns neither a lowly place of refuge among the beasts of the field, nor shepherds who were the first to offer Him adoration. As Christ the God-man there finally appears on earth the only truly new thing under the sun. The first and only perfect man – a man without sin, without evil, without lie, but above all: without the results of all these disasters: a man without death.

Almighty God, become man, brought to earth all His Divine perfection. He revealed to humanity His boundless spaciousness. The God Who cannot be encompassed, fitted into a virgin's womb, reveals to humanity all the riches of His Divinity. Thus He showed that man is only man when he is united to God with all his being. This means when he wholly lives with God, feels with God, thinks with God and acts with God. Then from a mortal and perishable being he becomes immortal, everlasting, full of Divine strength, grace, virtue and eternity.

God's angels brought uneducated shepherds to Bethlehem and they fell down before the crib on behalf of all mankind. God's angels brought there wise men from the east and they offered the three most resplendent gifts of all to the new King of all mankind. Angels came in the shining of glory to hymn and reveal to the whole human race the adoration of all the heavenly hosts for the Only One Who is in the Highest and Who came down to earth. He came in Person, to give His immortal self up to our death and, having defeated it, to acquire all mankind. Angels appear, shepherds and wise men come because the insignificant little town of Bethlehem is already the focal point of all the adoration of heaven and earth and the headlong movement of all creation towards the focal point of the universe – towards the Creator. These seekers after God are drawn here. They sought the eternal God and found a newborn infant wrapped in swaddling clothes. God and man are united in Christ the God-man. In the shepherds of Bethlehem and the wise men from the east are united Jews and Gentiles, all peoples dedicated to Christ who have accepted the preaching of the apostles and have kept it.

But herods have always risen up against this good news. And in our own days herods are striving to destroy this supernatural unity of those who believe in Christ and those who live in Christ.

In these days of universal joy and brightness, as we celebrate God becoming man on earth, we should pray especially for the restoration of peace on earth. This peace has been proclaimed by angels to us, who were born on earth. Angels call us to unite and seek with our whole life the light of Truth, the Sun of Righteousness, Christ Who took on Himself all our humanity, body and soul, so that they may be sanctified and divinized through faithfulness to Him. As the Apostle exclaims, *ye are all the children of light and the children of the day* (1 Thess. 5, 5).

Let us repent of our sins. Let us turn away from their darkness. Let us be aware that any, even the smallest, sin has already darkened us, cut us off, separated us from God and from our neighbour. Let us seek in our hearts, as in the lowliest of caves, that corner where God has already been born and dwells, not spurning us, but desiring to become wholly incarnate in us, enlighten us, offering us His profound peace, His love, His Truth and Righteousness, His eternity!

Christ is born, glorify Him!

+ Mark, Archbishop of Berlin, Germany and Great Britain, Munich-Berlin, December 2014

ON HOLY TRADITION

From *The Truth of Our Faith: A Discourse from Holy Scripture on the Teachings of True Christianity*, By Elder Cleopa of Romania

Archimandrite Cleopa (Ilie; 1912–1998) was a well known twentieth century writer and spiritual elder of Romania. One chapter in his book, The Truth of Our Faith, is dedicated to the defence of the Orthodox teaching on Holy Scripture against criticism by Protestants. This chapter, organized as a dialogue, is a helpful aide in apologetics, and explains the significance of Tradition in the Orthodox Church.

Inquirer: What is the Holy Tradition that the Orthodox consider to be the second source of Holy Revelation and equal to Holy Scripture?

Elder Cleopa: Holy Tradition is the teaching of the Church, given by God with a *living voice*, a portion of which was later written down. Like Holy Scripture, Holy Tradition also contains Holy Revelation, and is therefore fundamental for our salvation. Holy Tradition is *the life of the Church in the Holy Spirit*; and, in concord with the enduring life of the Church, it is a wellspring of Holy Revelation, and thus it possesses the same authority as Holy Scripture.

According to the old chronologies, 3,678 years passed from the time of Adam to Abraham; if we add 430 years of the Israelites' time in Egypt, we have 4,108 years. Throughout this period of time Holy Scripture did not exist, nor was the Sabbath observed among the people. For thousands of years the faithful and chosen people were guided on the path of salvation by Holy Tradition alone—namely, from the teachings about God which they received from a living voice. Only during the 1,400 years from the time of Moses until the advent of Christ were they guided by the Holy Scriptures of the Old Testament.



Inquirer: What is the Holy Tradition that the Orthodox consider to be the second source of Holy Revelation and equal to Holy Scripture?

Just as people were guided in the knowledge of God and on the path of salvation by Holy Tradition alone (that is, by a living voice—oral tradition) during the period of time before the books of the Old Testament were written, so were the people similarly guided before books of the New Testament were written. Holy Tradition was the guide by which the first Christians were directed to the path of salvation. The first Person to bring the teachings of the New Testament with a living voice to the ears of the people was our Saviour Jesus Christ Himself, Who taught the people continually for three and a half years, spreading His Gospel without writing any of it down. Inasmuch as He was fulfilling His obedience to His Father, He did not send His Apostles to write the Gospel, but rather to preach it to the whole world, saying: *Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen* (Mat. 28:19-20). From its establishment in (33 AD) until the year 44 AD, when the Holy Apostle Matthew wrote the first Gospel,^[1] the Church was governed without the Scriptures of the New Testament, but by Holy Tradition, only part of which was later recorded. Although there were many other writers who were considered inspired and faithful scribes of the Apostles, it is the Church which did or did not recognize them, for She is unerring. The Church lived the truth of the Gospel even before anything was committed to writing, having lived by Holy Tradition from the outset.

Thus, Holy Tradition is this: the source and the root of the two Testaments—the Old and the New—and this is why we call it a source of Holy Revelation, for it carries the same weight as Holy Scripture.

Inq.: Yes, but it is said that because Holy Scripture is the word of God it must not be substituted by or exchanged for Tradition, which is the word of man, as is written in the

Gospel: *Why do you also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? . . . Ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition. Ye hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying: This people . . . in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrine the commandments of men.* (Mat. 15:3, 6-9; Mk. 7:13). Thus, we have no need to replace or supplement the law of God, contained in Holy Scripture, with the tradition of men.

EC: What your friends have told you is not at all true, since the law of God is not contained in Holy Scripture alone. Listen to what the divine Evangelist John says: *And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen*(Jn. 21:25). Again, the same Evangelist declares in one of his epistles: *Having many things to write unto you, I would not write with paper and ink: but I trust to come unto you, and speak face to face, that our joy may be full* (2 Jn. 1:12). So you see that when the holy Evangelist had the opportunity, he taught his disciples more by the living voice of Tradition than by his epistles to them. While your friends observe at all costs only what is written, they do not take into account that the Saviour and the majority of His Apostles did not leave any writings, but rather taught orally, with the living voice of Tradition.

Inq.: In that case, I don't know how Christians are to understand the statement that we must not be seduced by the false teachings of men, especially those who are religious and rely on Scripture. After all, the Apostle counsels us: *Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ* (Col. 2:8). It is our responsibility, then, to preserve ourselves from the false traditions of men.

EC: Dearest to Christ, you do not discern the difference between the teachings of human traditions and those that proceed from the apostolic and evangelical tradition. You have brought an excerpt here from Holy Scripture that refers to the tradition of human teachings and pseudo philosophy that has no relationship whatsoever to the evangelical and Apostolic Tradition of the Church of Jesus Christ. Holy Tradition is neither a tradition of men, nor a philosophy, nor some kind of trickery; it is the word of God which He personally delivered to us. The great Apostle Paul teaches and exhorts us to fervently keep the traditions, saying; *Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle* (2 Thess. 2:15). Some people to the contrary advise weaker Christians to slander and abandon the Apostolic and evangelical traditions, not understanding that Holy Scripture itself is a fruit of the Holy Spirit, and it grew out of the roots and tree of Holy Tradition.

Inq.: Why isn't Holy Scripture sufficient for faith and salvation, with no need whatsoever of Tradition? This is apparent from the words of the Apostle Paul to Timothy: *And that from a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness* (2 Tim. 3:15-16). These words are clear. It is unnecessary to add anything to Holy Scripture.

EC: Here he is speaking only of Old Testament Scripture, for the New Testament had not yet been written. Paul wrote to Timothy that a good teacher could use the Old Testament to support his faith in Christ and his instruction in Christianity. According to the notion that you mistakenly assert, it would follow that not one book of the New Testament—those written after the epistles of the Apostle Paul to Timothy—should be accepted. It is enough instead for us to recognize the Old Testament books mentioned in the passage to which you refer.

Inq.: Some people don't acknowledge Tradition because they say that with the passing of time it yielded to many illegitimate elements; so that, especially today, we are no longer able to discern the true Apostolic Tradition from the false.

EC: The Church of Christ determined the truths of the Faith, according to the long course of Tradition, through the teachings and canons of the holy Ecumenical Councils, decrees and the Symbol of Faith [The Creed], and by confessions [of Faith] made by holy and wonderworking hierarchs at the many local synods which have been held continuously since days of old. At these synods, the authenticity and genuineness of the holy Orthodox Faith was firmly established, primarily in those areas where it was attacked by the existing heresies of the time. The irrevocable and inalterable content of Holy Tradition emerges from the totality of those synods. This can be understood by closely examining the essence of the following precepts:

- Do not sanction concepts that contain inconsistencies or contradictions with Apostolic Tradition and Holy Scripture. (A teaching is to be considered worthy of the name "Tradition" when it stems from the Saviour or the Holy Apostles, and is directly influenced by the Holy Spirit.)
- Tradition is that which has been protected by the Apostolic Church, and has an uninterrupted continuity up to today.
- Tradition is that which is confessed and practiced by the entire universal Orthodox Church.
- Tradition is that which is in harmony with the greater part of the [Church] fathers and ecclesiastical writers.

When a tradition does not fulfill these stipulations, it cannot be considered true and holy, and consequently cannot be considered admissible or fit to be observed.

Inq.: Notwithstanding all the efforts which you say the Orthodox Church has made and continues to make relative to the truth of Tradition, some believe only the teachings which are contained in Holy Scripture. For the first Christians—they say—accepted only such writings as were contained in Holy Scripture, as it is written: *These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so* (Acts 17:11). From this it follows that we should observe the teachings we find in Holy Scripture.

EC: The great Apostle Paul, however, commends the Christians of Corinth not because they kept the written teachings, but because they obeyed him and diligently observed the oral teachings that they had received from him. Listen to what he writes; *Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and even as I delivered to you, ye are holding fast the traditions* (1 Cor. 11:2). I wonder which is better for us to do: to observe only the written teachings, or to follow the great Apostle Paul who extols those who keep the unwritten tradition as well? Furthermore, we have established that the Holy Apostles and Evangelists believed and preached abundantly from Holy Tradition, which they inherited from of old, and which is not written anywhere in Holy Scripture.

Inq.: Where specifically does it appear that the Holy Apostles taught anything other than what was written in Holy Scripture?

EC: Here are two testimonies: The Holy Apostle Jude says in his catholic epistle, including in verse nine: *But when the archangel Michael, contending with the devil, disputed about the body of Moses, he did not presume to pronounce a reviling judgment upon him, but said, The Lord rebuke thee* (Jude 9). Dearest to Christ, search all of Holy Scripture and see if you will find this citation. Still further down in the same epistle the Apostle refers to the prophecy of Enoch, saying: *And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken*

against him (Jude 14-20). However, the Apostle Jude is not the only one to speak from Tradition. Listen to what the illustrious Paul says in his second epistle to Timothy: *Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith* (2 Tim. 3:8). And again the renowned Apostle Paul, guiding the priests of Ephesus, says: *Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, it is more blessed to give than to receive* (Acts 20:35). Now I ask you who insist on only putting faith in the written word: From where did the two Apostles—Jude and Paul—take these words? For you will not find them anywhere in Holy Scripture.

Inq.: Still, I question the possibility of preserving Holy Tradition to this day unadulterated and genuine in all respects, as it was in the beginning. Shouldn't we possess more assurances from the written teachings of Holy Scripture?

EC: You saw how the famed Paul commends the Christians of Corinth for carefully and mindfully keeping the unwritten traditions they had received from his very lips. Moreover, you heard that the Apostles Paul and Jude employed words in their preaching taken directly from Holy Tradition, such as those referring to the prophecy of Enoch, and others. I also pointed out to you by what means Holy Tradition was preserved throughout the ages. Furthermore, the same Apostle Paul exhorts and directs the Christians of Thessalonica to be very attentive and vigilant to keep the Holy Tradition: *Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle* (2 Thess. 2:15). And in another place he says: *But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed* (Gal. 1:8). In other words, he is speaking of the Gospel that he handed down to them with a living voice and not only by the written word.

Inq.: How was this Canon of Holy Tradition in the Church preserved over the span of thousands of years? In our age, some allege that the clergy and ecclesiastical writers alter from day to day the truth of Holy Scripture and the Apostolic Tradition, which in the beginning was authentic and genuine? They say that if you have in your hand a book that was published 50 years ago and you put it next to one published recently, they would have nothing in common. It therefore follows that if the hierarchs and priests have done this with the sacred books, they would do the same with the Holy Tradition which the Orthodox boast they have preserved unscathed from [the time of] the Holy Apostles.

EC: What your companions have accepted is not at all correct. The teachings of the Church of Christ are guarded by the Holy Spirit and cannot err (Mat. 10:17-20, John 4: 16-26, 1 Tim. 3:15). The very founder of the Church, Jesus Christ, governs it in an unseen way, until the end of the ages (Mat. 28:20). If some ecclesiastical writers, hierarchs, priests or laity translated the Bible from another language, or amended some passage containing an expression which does not correspond to our present-day speech, this would only be an adjustment and modification of the expression, and not a serious alteration of the substance of the Biblical text. If a Romanian from the time of the Elder Mirtsea or Stephan the Great (1504) were resurrected today and you wanted to speak with him, you would only with difficulty understand him, because the language has developed into something that is not exactly what was spoken then. This is precisely what has happened with respect to the books. With the passage of time, the writers' words or expressions were amended with appropriate present-day language—without however, changing the meaning of the profound and sacred writings. I previously referred you to the foundation upon which Holy Tradition rests, and the means by which its authentic, original image is reliably preserved and conveyed throughout the ages. I am referring to the ancient Symbol of Faith (The Creed), the Apostolic Canons, and the dogmatic decisions of the Seven^[2] Ecumenical Councils. To these can also be added the following monumental and meaningful testaments—assurances of the unimpaired preservation of Holy Tradition:

- The acts of the early Church are witnessed by the company of the Apostles, amongst whom are Saint Ignatius the God-bearer (+104 AD), a disciple of the Apostles, and Saint Polycarp of Smyrna (+106 AD). These Fathers admonished the faithful of their day to guard themselves from the teachings of heretics, and to fully maintain only the Apostolic Tradition (Eusebius of Caesarea, Ecclesiastical History, 2:36).

- Eusebius tells us that Hegesippus attempted to collect the whole of apostolic tradition, and he nearly accomplished this, gathering more than five volumes of material that Eusebius had studied. Unfortunately, with the passage of time, these books were eventually lost (Eusebius of Caesarea, Ecclesiastical History, 4:8).

- Saint Irenaeus (+202 AD) and Clement of Alexandria (+215 AD) inform us: "Those who explain Scripture without the help of the Church's Tradition cut asunder the significance of truth" (*Stromatis*, p. 7).

Further behold those brilliant witnesses representing the faith of apostolic times and the period immediately following them up until the fourth century. The acts of the ancient Church are an important testimony to the value of the Holy Tradition, and to the honor shown it from those times until today.

- Origin (+250 AD) says: "Preserve the Holy Tradition in the Church."

- St. Epiphanius (+403 AD) writes: "It is necessary to hold to the Tradition because it is not possible for everything to be found in Holy Scripture. The Holy Apostles handed down some things via the written word, while others via the spoken."

- Saint John Chrysostom (+407 AD) says: "Hence it is clear that the Holy Apostles did not deliver everything by epistle; rather many things they handed down via the spoken word which is also trustworthy. If there is Tradition, then don't ask for anything more" (4th Homily on 2 Thess. See verse 2:45)

- Saint Gregory of Nyssa (+394 AD) writes: "We have the Tradition established for us by the Fathers as an inheritance by Apostolic succession, transmitted via the saints" (Against Eunomius, Book 40).

- Saint Basil the Great (+379 AD) in his writings provides similar testimony. Here is how he expresses it: "Among the dogmas and *kerygma* (evangelical truths) that are safeguarded in the Church, some we have from the written teachings, while others we have received orally from the Tradition of the Apostles through hidden succession. The latter hold the same legitimacy and force as the written texts" (*On the Holy Spirit*).

We must uphold Holy Tradition with great reverence and godliness, for not all that is needful to effect our salvation is found within Holy Scripture. Holy Scripture instructs us to do many things; however, it does not manifest the light to us. For example, it instructs us to be baptized, but it doesn't explain to us the method. Likewise, it guides us to confess our sins, to receive Communion, to be sacramentally wed; but nowhere does it specify the rite enabling us to fulfill these *mysterion* (sacraments). Furthermore, it instructs us to pray, but doesn't tell us how, where, and when. It tells us to make the sign of the Holy Cross in front of our chest according to the psalmist: *Lord, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us*; but it doesn't show us how. Who teaches us in writing to worship facing east? Where in Scripture are we told the words of the *epiclesis* (invocation) of the Holy Spirit for the sanctification of the all-holy Mysteries? Which teaching from Holy Scripture instructs us to bless the water of Baptism and the oil of Holy Chrismation? Which passage in Scripture teaches us about the threefold denunciation and the renunciations of Satan before Holy Baptism? The prayer of glorification toward the Holy Trinity—"Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit"—from which passage did it come to us?

Posing these questions to the slanderer of Tradition, Saint Basil the Great says: "If we consent to abandon the unwritten traditions on the pretext that they don't have great worth, we err in great and elevated matters, rejecting the Gospel."

Therefore, the order by which the Church upholds the unwritten is as follows: Whatever is of Apostolic origin and is practiced by the Fathers becomes valid as tradition, and has the power of law in the Church of Christ (*The Rudder*, Neamts Monastery, 1844, Canons 87, 91). It must be preserved accordingly, because its importance and benefit springs from the relationship that exists between it and Holy Scripture. It is true that both have remained within a reciprocal unity and intimate relationship—a relationship based upon the fact that both comprise the holy Revelation of God, and are the fount and source of Revelation for us. Hence, it is not possible for an inner contradiction to exist between the two, or for us to exclude one from the other. Holy Scripture possesses its unique witness of scriptural canon, as well as its dogmatic character (its divine inspiration), only in and with Holy Tradition; while Holy Tradition is able to prove the authenticity of its truth only together with Holy Scripture.

Translation from Romanian by Orthodox Advice

The Hebrew Bible Moses Couldn't Read

Masoretic Text vs. Original Hebrew

Posted on [March 12, 2012](#) by [Fr Joseph Gleason](#)



The Masoretic Text is significantly different from the original Hebrew Scriptures.

I used to believe the [Masoretic Text](#) was a perfect copy of the original Old Testament. I used to believe that the Masoretic Text was how God divinely preserved the Hebrew Scriptures throughout the ages. I was wrong.

The oldest copies of the Masoretic Text only date back to the 10th century, nearly 1000 years *after* the time of Christ. And these texts differ from the originals in many specific ways. The Masoretic text is named after the [Masoretes](#), who were scribes and Torah scholars who worked in the middle-east between the 7th and 11th centuries. The texts they received, and the edits they provided, ensured that the modern Jewish texts would manifest a notable departure from the original Hebrew Scriptures.

Historical research reveals five significant ways in which the Masoretic Text is different from the original Old Testament:

1. The Masoretes admitted that they received corrupted texts to begin with.
2. The Masoretic Text is written with a radically different alphabet than the original.
3. The Masoretes added vowel points which did not exist in the original.
4. The Masoretic Text excluded several books from the Old Testament scriptures.
5. The Masoretic Text includes changes to prophecy and doctrine.

We will consider each point in turn:

Receiving Corrupted Texts

Many people believe that the ancient Hebrew text of Scripture was divinely preserved for many centuries, and was ultimately recorded in what we now call the “Masoretic Text”. But what did the Masoretes themselves believe? Did they believe they were perfectly preserving the ancient text? Did they even think they had *received* a perfect text to begin with?

History says “no” . . .

Scribal emendations – Tikkune Soferim

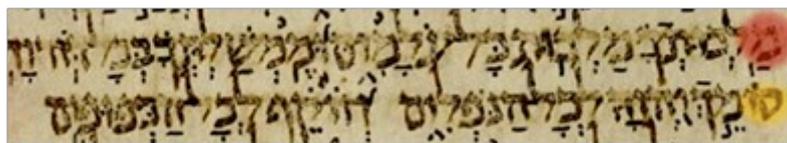
Early rabbinic sources, from around 200 CE, mention several passages of Scripture in which the conclusion is inevitable that the ancient reading must have differed from that of the present text. . . . Rabbi Simon ben Pazzi (3rd century) calls these readings “emendations of the Scribes” (tikkune Soferim; Midrash Genesis Rabbah xlix. 7), assuming that the Scribes actually made the changes. This view was adopted by the later Midrash and by the majority of Masoretes.

In other words, *the Masorites themselves felt they had received a partly corrupted text.*

A stream cannot rise higher than its source. If the texts they *started* with were corrupted, then even a *perfect* transmission of those texts would only serve to preserve the *mistakes*. Even if the Masoretes demonstrated great care when copying the texts, their diligence would not bring about the correction of even one error.

In addition to these *intentional* changes by Hebrew scribes, there also appear to be a number of *accidental* changes which they allowed to creep into the Hebrew text. For example, consider Psalm 145 . . .

Psalm 145 is an acrostic poem. Each line of the Psalm starts with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Yet in the Masoretic Text, one of the lines is completely missing:

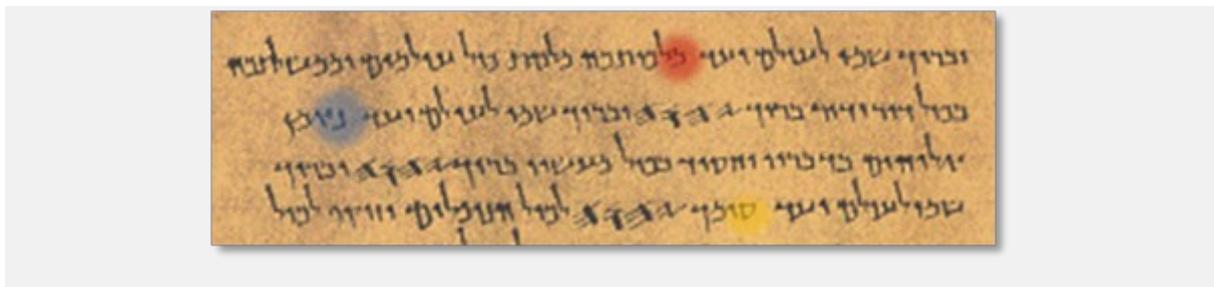


Psalm 145 is an acrostic psalm where each verse begins with the next letter of the Hebrew alphabet. In the Aleppo Codex the first verse begins with the letter aleph, the second with

the beyt, the third with the gimel, and so on. Verse 13 begins with the letter מ (mem-top highlighted letter), the 13th letter of the Hebrew alphabet; the next verse begins with the letter ס (samech-bottom highlighted letter), the 15th letter of the Hebrew alphabet. There is no verse beginning with the 14th letter נ (nun).

Yet the Septuagint (LXX) Greek translation of the Old Testament *does* include the missing verse. And when that verse is translated back into Hebrew, it starts with the Hebrew letter נ (nun) which was missing from the Masoretic Text.

In the early 20th century, the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered in caves near Qumran. They revealed an ancient Hebrew textual tradition which differed from the tradition preserved by the Masoretes. Written in Hebrew, copies of Psalm 145 were found which include the missing verse:



When we examine Psalm 145 from the Dead Sea Scrolls, we find between the verse beginning with the מ (mem-top) and the verse beginning with the ס (samech-bottom), the verse beginning with the letter נ (nun-center). This verse, missing from the Aleppo Codex, and missing from all modern Hebrew Bibles that are copied from this codex, but found in the Dead Sea Scrolls, says נאמן אלוהים בדבריו וחסידי כול מעשיו (The Lord is faithful in His words and holy in all His works).

The missing verse reads, “*The Lord is faithful in His words and holy in all His works.*” This verse can be found in the [Orthodox Study Bible](#), which relies on the Septuagint. But this verse is absent from the [King James Version](#) (KJV), the [New King James Version](#) (NKJV), the [Complete Jewish Bible](#), and every other translation which is based on the Masoretic Text.

In this particular case, it is easy to demonstrate that the Masoretic Text is in error, for it is obvious that Psalm 145 was originally written as an acrostic Psalm. But what are we to make of the *thousands* of other locations where the Masoretic Text diverges from the Septuagint? If the Masoretic Text could completely erase an entire verse from one of the Psalms, how many other passages of Scripture have been edited? How many other verses have been erased?



God's name is shown above in Paleo-Hebrew (top) and in modern Hebrew (bottom). Modern Hebrew letters would have been unrecognizable to Abraham, Moses, David, and most of the authors of the Old Testament.

A Radically Different Alphabet

If Moses were to see a copy of the Masoretic Text, he wouldn't be able to read it.

As discussed in [this recent post](#), the original Old Testament scriptures were written in Paleo-Hebrew, a text closely related to the ancient Phoenician writing system.

The Masoretic Text is written with an alphabet which was borrowed from Assyria (Persia) around the 6th-7th century B.C., and is almost 1000 years *newer* than the form of writing used by Moses, David, and most of the Old Testament authors.

Adding Vowel Points

For thousands of years, ancient Hebrew was only written with consonants, no vowels. When reading these texts, they had to supply all of the vowels from memory, *based on oral tradition*.

In Hebrew, just like modern languages, vowels can make a big difference. The change of a single vowel can radically change the meaning of a word. An example in English is the difference between "SLAP" and "SLIP". These words have very different definitions. Yet if our language was written without vowels, both of these words would be written "SLP". Thus the vowels are very important.

The most extensive change the Masoretes brought to the Hebrew text was the addition of [vowel points](#). In an attempt to solidify for all-time the "correct" readings of all the Hebrew Scriptures, the Masoretes added a series of dots to the text, identifying which vowel to use in any given location.

Adam Clarke, an 18th Century Protestant scholar, demonstrates that the vowel-point system is actually a running commentary which was incorporated into the text itself. In the General Preface of his biblical commentary published in 1810, Clarke writes:

"The Masorets were the most extensive Jewish commentators which that nation could ever boast. The system of punctuation, probably invented by them, is a continual gloss on the Law and the Prophets; their vowel points, and prosaic and metrical accents, &c., give every word

to which they are affixed a peculiar kind of meaning, which in their simple state, multitudes of them can by no means bear. The vowel points alone add whole conjugations to the language. This system is one of the most artificial, particular, and extensive comments ever written on the Word of God; for there is not one word in the Bible that is not the subject of a particular gloss through its influence.”

Another early scholar who investigated this matter was Louis Cappel, who wrote during the early 17th century. An article in the 1948 edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica includes the following information regarding his research of the Masoretic Text:

“As a Hebrew scholar, he concluded that the vowel points and accents were not an original part of Hebrew, but were inserted by the Masorete Jews of Tiberias, not earlier than the 5th Century AD, and that the primitive Hebrew characters are Aramaic and were substituted for the more ancient at the time of the captivity. . . The various readings in the Old Testament Text and the differences between the ancient versions and the Masoretic Text convinced him that the integrity of the Hebrew text as held by Protestants, was untenable.”

Many Protestants love the Masoretic Text, believing it to be a trustworthy representation of the original Hebrew text of Scripture. Yet, at the same time, most Protestants reject Orthodox Church Tradition as being untrustworthy. They believe that the Church’s oral tradition could not possibly preserve Truth over a long period of time.

Therefore, the vowel points of the Masoretic Text put Protestants in a precarious position. If they believe that the Masoretic vowels are *not* trustworthy, then they call the Masoretic Text itself into question. But if they believe that the Masoretic vowels *are* trustworthy, then they are forced to believe that the Jews successfully preserved the vowels of Scripture for thousands of years, *through oral tradition alone*, until the Masoretes finally invented the vowel points hundreds of years after Christ. Either conclusion is at odds with mainstream Protestant thought.

Either oral tradition can be trusted, or it can’t. If it can be trusted, then there is no reason to reject the Traditions of the Orthodox Church, which have been preserved for nearly 2000 years. But if traditions are always untrustworthy, then the Masoretic vowel points are also untrustworthy, and should be rejected.

Excluding Books of Scripture from the Old Testament

The Masoretic Text promotes a canon of the Old Testament which is significantly shorter than the canon represented by the Septuagint. Meanwhile, Orthodox Christians and Catholics have Bibles which incorporate the canon of the Septuagint. The books of Scripture found in the Septuagint, but not found in the Masoretic Text, are commonly called either the *Deuterocanon* or the *anagignoskomena*. While it is outside the scope of this article to perform an in-depth study of the canon of Scripture, a few points relevant to the Masoretic Text should be made here:

- With the exception of two books, *the Deuterocanon was originally written in Hebrew.*
- In three places, *the Talmud explicitly refers to the book of Sirach as “Scripture”.*

- [Jesus celebrated Hanukkah](#), a feast which originates in the book of *1 Maccabees*, and nowhere else in the Old Testament.
- The New Testament book of *Hebrews* recounts the stories of multiple Old Testament saints, including a reference to martyrs in the book of *2 Maccabees*.
- The book of *Wisdom* includes a striking [prophecy of Christ](#), and its fulfillment is recorded in *Matthew 27*.
- Numerous findings among the Dead Sea Scrolls suggest the existence of 1st century Jewish communities which accepted many of the Deuterocanonical books as authentic Scripture.
- Many thousands of 1st-century Christians were converts from Judaism. The early Church accepted the inspiration of the Deuterocanon, and frequently quoted authoritatively from books such as *Wisdom*, *Sirach*, and *Tobit*. This early Christian practice suggests that many Jews accepted these books, even prior to their conversion to Christianity.
- [Ethiopian Jews](#) preserved the ancient Jewish acceptance of the Septuagint, including much of its canon of Scripture. *Sirach*, *Judith*, *Baruch*, and *Tobit* are among the books included in the [canon of the Ethiopian Jews](#).
- These reasons, among others, suggest the existence of a large 1st-century Jewish community which accepted the Deuterocanon as inspired Scripture.

Changes to Prophecy and Doctrine

When compiling any given passage of Scripture, the Masoretes had to choose among multiple versions of the ancient Hebrew texts. In some cases the textual differences were relatively inconsequential. For example, two texts may differ over the spelling of a person's name.

However, in other cases they were presented with textual variants which made a considerable impact upon doctrine or prophecy. In cases like these, were the Masoretes completely objective? Or did their anti-Christian biases influence any of their editing decisions?

In the 2nd century A.D., hundreds of years before the time of the Masoretes, Justin Martyr investigated a number of Old Testament texts in various Jewish synagogues. He ultimately concluded that the Jews who had rejected Christ had also rejected the Septuagint, and were now tampering with the Hebrew Scriptures themselves:

“But I am far from putting reliance in your teachers, who refuse to admit that the interpretation made by the seventy elders who were with Ptolemy [king] of the Egyptians is a correct one; and they attempt to frame another. And I wish you to observe, that they have altogether taken away many Scriptures from the [Septuagint] translations effected by those seventy elders who were with Ptolemy, and by which this very man who was crucified is proved to have been set forth expressly as God, and man, and as being crucified, and as dying” (~150 A.D., Justin Martyr, Dialogue with Trypho the Jew, Chapter LXXI).

If Justin Martyr's findings are correct, then it is likely that the Masoretes inherited a Hebrew textual tradition which had already been corrupted with an anti-Christian bias. And if we look at some of the most significant differences between the Septuagint and the Masoretic Text, that is precisely what we see. For example, consider the comparisons in the table at the end.

These are not random, inconsequential differences between the texts. Rather, these appear to be places where the Masoretes (or their forebears) had a varied selection of texts to consider, and their decisions were influenced by anti-Christian bias. Simply by choosing one Hebrew text over another, they were able to subvert the Incarnation, the virgin birth, the deity of Christ, His healing of the blind, His crucifixion, and His salvation of the Gentiles. The Jewish scribes were able to edit Jesus out of many important passages, simply by rejecting one Hebrew text, and selecting (or editing) another text instead.

Thus, the Masoretic Text has *not* perfectly preserved the original Hebrew text of Scripture. The Masoretes received corrupted texts to begin with, they used an alphabet which was radically different from the original Hebrew, they added countless vowel points which did not exist in the original, they excluded several books from the Old Testament scriptures, and they included a number of significant changes to prophecy and doctrine.

It would seem that the Septuagint (LXX) translation is not only far more *ancient* than the Masoretic Text . . . the Septuagint is far more *accurate* as well. It is a more faithful representation of the original Hebrew Scriptures.

Perhaps that is why Jesus and the apostles frequently quoted from the Septuagint, and accorded it full authority as the inspired Word of God.

This passage in the New Testament . . .	depends on this passage from the Septuagint (LXX) version of the Old Testament . . .	to show that God had prophecied this . . .	but the Masoretic Text (MT) reads quite differently . . .
"when He [Jesus] comes into the world, He says, ' . . . a body you have prepared for me' . . . we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ" (Hebrews 10:4-10)	"Sacrifice and offering You did not will; But a body You prepared for me" (Psalm 39:7, Orthodox Study Bible)	The Incarnation	"You desired neither sacrifice nor meal offering; You dug ears for me " (Psalm 40:7, Complete Jewish Bible)
" . . . Behold, the virgin shall be with child and shall bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel . . ." (Matthew 1:21-23)	"behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and you shall call His name Immanuel." (Isaiah 7:14, Orthodox Study Bible)	The Virgin Birth	" behold, the young woman is with child , and she shall bear a son, and she shall call his name Immanuel." (Isaiah 7:14, Complete Jewish Bible)
"And again, when he bringeth in the firstbegotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him." (Hebrews 1:6)	"Rejoice, ye heavens, with him, and let all the angels of God worship him" (Deuteronomy 32:43, Brenton's LXX)	The Deity of Christ	The MT of Deuteronomy 32:43 says nothing about angels worshiping the Messiah. (KJV, Jewish Bible, etc.)
Jesus said He fulfilled the OT prophecy to "proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind" (Luke 4:18)	The OT prophecied that Messiah would "preach liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind" (Isaiah 61:1, Orthodox Study Bible)	Jesus Healing the Blind	The MT of Isaiah 61:1 says nothing about the blind having their sight restored. (KJV, Jewish Bible, etc.)
Numerous NT passages mention Christ's hands and feet being pierced by crucifixion.	"They pierced my hands and my feet" (Psalm 21:17, Orthodox Study Bible)	The Crucifixion	" like a lion, my hands and my feet " (Psalm 22:17, Complete Jewish Bible)
"and in his name shall the Gentiles trust." (Matt. 12:21)	"and in his name shall the Gentiles trust." (Isaiah 42:4, Brenton's LXX)	Gentiles Trusting in Jesus' Name	" and the isles shall wait for his law. " (Isaiah 42:4, KJV)