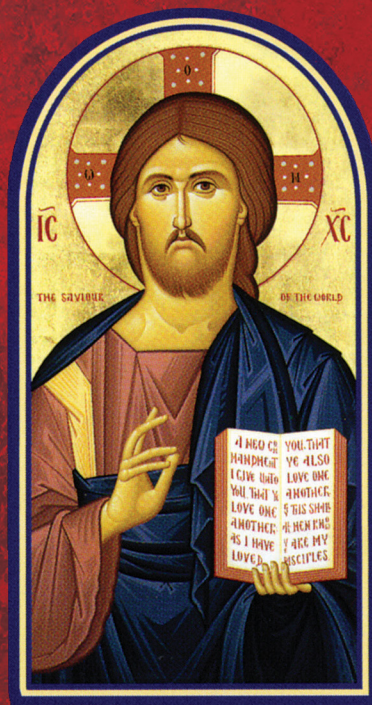


THE
ORTHODOX
STUDY BIBLE



ANCIENT CHRISTIANITY
SPEAKS TO TODAY'S WORLD

THE
ORTHODOX
STUDY
BIBLE



With gratitude to the
individuals who made this
Orthodox Study Bible possible

Dr. John and Helen Collis
and family



THE ORTHODOX STUDY BIBLE

Prepared under the auspices of the
Academic Community of St. Athanasius Academy
of Orthodox Theology, Elk Grove, California.
Fr. Jack Norman Sparks, Ph.D., Dean

The Old Testament General Editors

Metropolitan MAXIMOS, Th.D.
Eugen Pentiu, Th.D., Ph.D.

Michel Najim, Ph.D.
Jack Norman Sparks, Ph.D.

Project Director
Jack Norman Sparks

Managing Editor
J. Richard Ballew

The New Testament General Editors

Joseph Allen, Th.D.
Jack Norman Sparks, Ph.D.

Michel Najim, Ph.D.
Theodore Stylianopoulos, Th.D.

Project Director
Peter E. Gillquist

Managing Editor
Alan Wallerstedt

Overview Committee

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Archbishop DEMETRIOS
Metropolitan THEODOSIUS
Metropolitan HERMAN
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The Orthodox Study Bible

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The Old Testament


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Exodus	Ex	65	Ecclesiastes	Ecc	870
Leviticus	Lv	117	Song of Songs	SS	882
Numbers	Nm	160	Wisdom of Solomon	WSol	893
Deuteronomy	Dt	210	Wisdom of Sirach	WSir	917
Joshua	Jos	256	Hosea	Hos	982
Judges	Jdg	284	Amos	Am	996
Ruth	Ru	313	Micah	Mic	1004
1 Kingdoms (1 Samuel)	1Kg	319	Joel	Joel	1010
2 Kingdoms (2 Samuel)	2Kg	353	Obadiah	Ob	1017
3 Kingdoms (1 Kings)	3Kg	386	Jonah	Jon	1020
4 Kingdoms (2 Kings)	4Kg	422	Nahum	Nah	1024
1 Chronicles (1 Paraleipomenon)	1Ch	455	Habakkuk	Hab	1027
2 Chronicles (2 Paraleipomenon)	2Ch	485	Zephaniah	Zep	1032
1 Ezra (2 Esdras)	1Ez	521	Haggai	Hag	1036
2 Ezra (Ezra/2 Esdras)	2Ez	537	Zechariah	Zec	1039
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Tobit	Tb	566	Isaiah	Is	1058
Judith	Jdt	578	Jeremiah	Jer	1111
Esther	Est	596	Baruch	Bar	1165
1 Maccabees	1Mc	609	Lamentations of Jeremiah	Lam	1171
2 Maccabees	2Mc	641	Epistle of Jeremiah	EJer	1180
3 Maccabees	3Mc	667	Ezekiel	Ezk	1184
Psalms	Ps	681	Daniel	Dan	1236
Job	Job	779			

The New Testament

Matthew	Mt	1265	1 Timothy	1Ti	1632
Mark	Mk	1328	2 Timothy	2Ti	1640
Luke	Lk	1359	Titus	Tts	1645
John	Jn	1418	Philemon	Phm	1650
Acts	Acts	1468	Hebrews	Heb	1652
Romans	Rom	1519	James	Jam	1673
1 Corinthians	1Co	1550	1 Peter	1Pt	1682
2 Corinthians	2Co	1573	2 Peter	2Pt	1690
Galatians	Gal	1587	1 John	1Jn	1696
Ephesians	Eph	1597	2 John	2Jn	1704
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INTRODUCTION TO THE ORTHODOX STUDY BIBLE



The last decade of the twentieth century saw an historic event. In 1993, *The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms* was released as the first English Bible with study material reflecting the ancient faith of the Eastern Orthodox Church.

St. Athanasius Academy, which had organized this effort, began receiving requests for the completion of the Old Testament—a monumental task which involved not only preparation of the study notes and outlines, but also the presentation of an acceptable Old Testament text. Though the Orthodox Church has never officially committed itself to a single text and list of Old Testament books, it has traditionally used the Greek Old Testament of the Septuagint (LXX). However, in Orthodoxy’s 200-year history in North America, no English translation of the LXX has ever been produced by the Church.

The contributors used the Alfred Rahlfs edition of the Greek text as the basis for the English translation. To this base they brought two additional major sources. The first is the Brenton text, a British translation of the Greek Old Testament, published in 1851. The availability of this work, and the respect accorded it, made it an obvious choice as a source document. Secondly, Thomas Nelson Publishers granted use of the Old Testament text of the New King James Version in the places where the English translation of the LXX would match that of the Masoretic (Hebrew) text. The development team at St. Athanasius Academy carefully studied these sources, along with other documents, to produce an English Old Testament text suitable for the project.

The organization of the Old Testament books, that is, their canonical order, was taken from *The Old Testament According to the Seventy*, published with the approval of the Holy Synod of the Church of Greece. The first edition was released in June, 1928. The Old Testament text presented in this volume does not claim to be a new or superior translation. The goal was to produce a text to meet the Bible-reading needs of English-speaking Orthodox Christians.

In some Old Testament books, including the Psalms, the numbering of chapters, and sometimes individual verses is different in the LXX version from the English translation of the Hebrew text (such as the *New King James Version* and *New Revised Standard Version*). To help the reader, the LXX psalm number appears first, followed by the alternate number in parentheses, such as Psalm 50 (51).

In addition to the difference in the numbering of the Psalms, the books of Jeremiah and Malachi show differences in the chapter and verse numbering when comparing *The Orthodox Study Bible* alongside English translations based on the Hebrew Old Testament text. The following shows how the Hebrew and LXX texts compare in the books of Jeremiah and Malachi.

Jeremiah

Hebrew	LXX	Hebrew	LXX
1:1—25:13	1:1—25:13	49:34b	25:20
25:14	—	50:1—51:44	27:1—28:45
25:15—38	32:1—25	51:45—49	—
26:1—43:13	33:1—50:13	51:50—64	28:46—60
44:1—30	51:1—30	52:1	52:1
45:1—5	51:31—35	52:2—3	—
46:1	—	52:4—14	52:2—12
46:2—25	26:1—24	52:15	—
46:26	—	52:16—27	52:13—24
46:27, 28	26:25, 26	52:28—30	—
47:1—7	29:1—7	52:31—34	52:25—28
48:1—44	31:1—44		
49:1—5	30:17—21		
49:6	—	Malachi	
49:7—22	30:1—16	1:1—3:18	1:1—3:18
49:23—27	30:28—32	4:1—3	3:19—21
49:28—33	30:22—27	4:4	3:24
49:34a, 35—39	25:14—19	4:5—6	3:22—23

The New Testament of *The Orthodox Study Bible* is taken from the New King James Version of the Bible. It is a translation of the Received Text of the Greek New Testament, with notes showing major variants in the Majority Text and the critical text of Nestle-Aland and the United Bible Societies.

The introductory material, commentary and notes accompanying the Old and New Testament books are presented in a vocabulary understandable to a high school graduate. This is not a book of scholars addressing other scholars, but rather scholars clearly communicating the treasures of the Orthodox biblical tradition with clergy and laypeople desirous of understanding their Christian beliefs and making them accessible to others.

Further, the decision was made that the notes and commentary which clarify the biblical text would emphasize the major themes of the Christian faith. Thus, the notes give primary attention to:

1. The Holy Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit
2. The Incarnation: The Divine Son of God becoming Man
3. The Centrality of the Church, the “dwelling place of God in the Spirit” (Eph 2:22)
4. The Virtues: God’s call to His people to live righteous and holy lives in Christ

To attain these goals, specific attention was given to the biblical interpretations of the fathers of the ancient and undivided Church, and to the consensus of the Seven Ecumenical or Church-wide Councils of Christendom, held from the fourth to eighth centuries.

The Holy Scriptures have always been integral to the life of the Church. The liturgical cycle of the year and the days of feasting and fasting are accompanied by Scripture readings from throughout the Bible. The lectionary in the back of *The Orthodox Study Bible* guides the reader along this biblical path through the Church year. Further, liturgical notes at the foot of the pages of *The Orthodox Study Bible* relate specific readings to the yearly cycle of prayer and worship. These notes are designated with the symbol □.

The prayer of the editors and contributors of *The Orthodox Study Bible* is that it presents an understandable Bible text and commentary to (1) English-speaking Orthodox Christians the world over and to (2) non-Orthodox readers interested in learning more about the faith of the historic Orthodox Church.

Lent, 2008

THE OLD TESTAMENT BOOKS

LISTED AND COMPARED

Orthodox Old Testament	Roman Catholic Old Testament	Protestant Old Testament
Genesis	Genesis	Genesis
Exodus	Exodus	Exodus
Leviticus	Leviticus	Leviticus
Numbers	Numbers	Numbers
Deuteronomy	Deuteronomy	Deuteronomy
Joshua	Joshua	Joshua
Judges	Judges	Judges
Ruth	Ruth	Ruth
1 Kingdoms (1 Samuel)	1 Kings	1 Samuel
2 Kingdoms (2 Samuel)	2 Kings	2 Samuel
3 Kingdoms (1 Kings)	3 Kings	1 Kings
4 Kingdoms (2 Kings)	4 Kings	2 Kings
1 Chronicles (1 Paraleipomenon)	1 Chronicles (1 Paraleipomenon)	1 Chronicles
2 Chronicles (2 Paraleipomenon)*	2 Chronicles (2 Paraleipomenon)	2 Chronicles
1 Ezra**	1 Esdras	Ezra
2 Ezra** (Ezra)	2 Esdras (Nehemiah)	Nehemiah
Nehemiah	Tobit	Esther*
Tobit	Judith	Job
Judith	Esther	Psalms (150 in number)
Esther	1 Maccabees	Proverbs
1 Maccabees	2 Maccabees	Ecclesiastes
2 Maccabees	Psalms (150 in number)	Song of Solomon
3 Maccabees	Job	Isaiah
Psalms (151 in number)	Proverbs of Solomon	Jeremiah
Job	Ecclesiastes	Lamentations
Proverbs of Solomon	Canticle of Canticles	Ezekiel
Ecclesiastes	Wisdom of Solomon	Daniel**
Song of Songs	Ecclesiasticus (Sirach)	Hosea
Wisdom of Solomon	Hosea	Joel
Wisdom of Sirach	Amos	Amos
Hosea	Micah	Obadiah
Amos	Joel	Jonah
Micah	Obadiah	Micah
Joel	Jonah	Nahum
Obadiah	Nahum	Habakkuk
Jonah	Habakkuk	Zephaniah
Nahum	Zephaniah	Haggai
Habakkuk	Haggai	Zechariah
Zephaniah	Zechariah	Malachi
Haggai	Malachi	
Zechariah	Isaiah	
Malachi	Jeremiah	
Isaiah	Baruch*	
Jeremiah	Lamentations	
Baruch	Ezekiel	
Lamentation of Jeremiah	Daniel	
Epistle of Jeremiah		
Ezekiel		
Daniel ***		

* Includes the Prayer of Manasseh
 **Also known as 1 & 2 Esdras
 ***"Susanna" is at the beginning of Daniel, "Bel and the Serpent" at the end. Also includes the "Hymn of the Three Young Men."

*Includes Epistle of Jeremiah

*Esther does not include those sections called "Additions to Esther."

**Daniel here does not include those sections separately labeled as the "Hymn of the Three Young Men," "Susanna," "Bel and the Serpent."

SOURCE ABBREVIATIONS

Source	Abbreviation	Source	Abbreviation
Ambrose of Milan	AmbM	Hilary of Poitiers	HilryP
Antony of Egypt	AntEg	Hippolytus	Hippol
Aphrahat the Persian	AphP	Ignatius of Antioch	IgnAnt
Athanasius the Great	AthanG	Irenaeus	Iren
Augustine of Hippo	Aug	Isaac the Syrian	IsaacS
Aurelius	Aur	Jerome	Jerome
Basil the Great	BasilG	John Cassian	JohnCas
Caesarius of Arles	Caes	John Chrysostom	JohnChr
Cassiodorus	Cass	John Climacus	JohnCli
Clement of Alexandria	ClemA	John of Damascus	JohnDm
Cyprian of Alexandria	CypA	Justin Martyr	Justin
Cyprian of Carthage	CypC	Leo the Great	LeoG
Cyprian of Jerusalem	CypJ	Mark the Ascetic	MkAsc
Cyril of Alexandria	CyrAl	Maximos the Confessor	MaxCon
Cyril of Jerusalem	CyrJer	Methodius	Meth
Dionysius	Dion	Neilos the Ascetic	Neilos
Elias the Presbyter	ElPres	Nicetas	Nic
Ephraim the Syrian	EphS	Seraphim of Sarov	SerSar
Epistle of Barnabas	Barn	Symeon the New Theologian	SymNew
Eusebius	Eusb	Theodore of Mopsuestia	TheoMop
Eustathius of Antioch	Eust	Theodoret	Theod
Gregory of Nazianzus	GrgNa	Theophylact of Bulgaria	Theoph
Gregory of Nyssa	GrgNy	Vincent of Lerins	VincLer
Gregory Palamas	GrgPal		
Gregory the Great (Pope)	GrgGt	Nicene Creed	Creed
Gregory the Theologian	GrgTheo	Canon of St. Andrew	CanonAnd
Hesychius	Hesych	Akathist Service	Akath

OVERVIEW OF THE BOOKS OF THE BIBLE

By The Right Reverend BASIL, Bishop of the Diocese of Wichita and Mid-America

THE OLD TESTAMENT

This introduction is a brief description of each of the forty-nine books of the Old Testament. It is helpful to keep in mind that, like the earliest Christian community, the Orthodox Church of today continues using the Greek version of the Old Testament known as the Septuagint (LXX). The Septuagint—referencing the seventy finest Jewish scholars, from all twelve Jewish tribes, who made the translation from the Hebrew into Greek—became the universally accepted version of the Old Testament since the time of its appearance some three centuries before the birth of Christ. Our Lord Jesus Christ, together with His apostles and evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, and also Peter and Paul, used this Greek version when quoting the Old Testament in their gospels and epistles. These inspired Old Testament books tell the story of God’s dealings with ancient Israel, from approximately 2000 BC until the time of Jesus.

A study of the Old Testament in the light of the authentic apostolic tradition will lead the reader to Him Who fulfilled the Law and the Prophets as He promised: Our Lord and God and Savior, Jesus Christ. This collection of forty-nine Old Testament books is traditionally subdivided into four sections: 1) the five books of the Law; 2) the books of history; 3) the books of wisdom and; 4) the books of prophecy.

The Five Books of the Law

First there are the books of the Law: *Genesis*, meaning “beginning,” since it recounts the beginning of God’s creation; *Exodus*, which means “exit” or “departure,” referring to the journey of the Hebrews from out of slavery in Egypt; *Leviticus*, a book detailing worship as led by the priests ordained from the tribe of Levi; *Numbers*, whose title is derived from the book’s opening account of the census or numbering of the people of Israel; *Deuteronomy*, meaning “second law,” since it gives a detailed listing of the additional laws given by God through Moses.

These first five books of the Old Testament, known jointly as the Pentateuch (*penta* means “five” in Greek) describe God’s creation of the world, the rebellion of Adam and Eve and the fall of man, and the history of God’s people from the days of Abraham, about 2000 BC, through the days of Moses, dated by many scholars at approximately 1250 BC.

The Books of History

The second section of the LXX Old Testament is known as the historical books. This group begins with the book of *Joshua*, the leader of the children

of Israel following the death of Moses, who brings God's people into the promised land after their forty years of wandering in the wilderness. *Judges* relates to the traditions of the various Hebrew tribes and the exploits of their own particular heroes, the Judges of whom the title speaks, who ruled the nation. The book of *Ruth* is the charming and heroic account of a Gentile woman who placed herself under the protection of the one true God, and in the process became an ancestor of King David, and of his descendent, Jesus Christ the Messiah of Israel.

First and Second Kingdoms (First and Second Samuel), whose principle characters are Samuel the faithful prophet, Saul the first king to rule over God's people, and David, Saul's successor and the first king of Judah in the south of Palestine, and Israel to the north. The books of *Third and Fourth Kingdoms* (First and Second Kings) opens with the enthronement of David's son Solomon and ends with the fall of the kingdom, including the destruction of its capital city of Jerusalem, and the exile of God's people from Palestine to Babylon.

First and Second Chronicles (First and Second Paraleipomenon) expand on the history recorded in *Third and Fourth Kingdoms*. The word *Paraleipomenon* is transliterated from the Greek and means "that which is omitted" in the two preceding books. The books of *First and Second Ezra* and *Nehemiah* continue this chronicle of divine history, focusing on the Jewish religious community after its return to Jerusalem from exile in Babylon.

The final books in the historical section of the Old Testament reveal the stories of people who lived heroic and God-directed lives under foreign domination and during the exile: *Tobit*, who was taken into captivity by the Assyrians; *Judith*, the pious and beautiful widow who saved her people from massacre by the invading Assyrian general; *Esther*, the Jewish queen of Persia who achieved the revocation of Haman's decree that would have allowed the persecution and mass murder of God's people; and the *Maccabees*, the family of the Hasmoneans and their followers, the faithful people who began the revolt and fought the wars of independence against foreign armies occupying their land.

The Books of Wisdom

The third section of the Old Testament is known as the books of Wisdom. The magnificent *Psalms* is the hymnal of both ancient Israel and of the Church. The book of *Job*, which in the canonical Greek LXX comes between *Psalms* and *Proverbs*, probes the depths of a man's unshakable faith in the face of tragedy and innocent suffering. *Proverbs* is a collection of moral and religious instruction taught to young people after their return from exile in Babylon. *Ecclesiastes* tells of the preacher who philosophically seeks to understand the meaning of human existence that the good man can find in this life. The moving *Song of Songs* by Solomon is a collection of lyric poems, written

in the language of human love and courtship, which also speaks prophetically of God's love for His beloved Bride, His Church. The *Wisdom of Solomon* promises reward and immortality to the righteous, praises wisdom and condemns the folly of idolatry. The *Wisdom of Sirach* consists of lectures to young people on ethical and religious themes.

These seven books of Wisdom literature—*The Psalms*, *Job*, *Proverbs*, *Ecclesiastes*, the *Song of Songs*, the *Wisdom of Solomon*, and the *Wisdom of Sirach*—proclaim that happiness (or “blessedness,” in the language of the Bible) is possible only through faith in and obedience to the one true God.

The Books of Prophecy

The fourth and final section of the LXX Old Testament includes the books of prophecy, which appear in an order different from the Hebrew and Vulgate collections.

Hosea gives a message of God's own redeeming love for His chosen people, even when they spurn Him and prostitute themselves to false gods. *Amos* is the simple shepherd called by God to denounce a self-satisfied nation for its grave social injustice, abhorrent immorality and its shallow and meaningless piety. *Micah* foretells the day when nations shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. He speaks of peace reigning over all who do justice, who love kindness, and who walk humbly with God. *Joel* is the prophet who foretells the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon all flesh. *Obadiah* prophesies the return of the exiles from Babylon. *Jonah* unwillingly accepts God's command to preach His mercy and forgiveness to a foreign nation.

Nabum prophesies the defeat of the powerful Assyrian enemy. *Habakkuk* deals with the perennial question, “How long, O Lord, shall I cry out to You, and You will not hear me?” (Hab 1:2). *Zephaniah* prophesies the dark days of Judah's destruction, but promises comfort and conciliation to those who wait patiently for the Lord and serve Him. *Haggai*, following the return of the exiles, exhorts them to rebuild the destroyed temple in order to unify their disrupted religious life and, more importantly, to prepare for the coming of the long awaited Messiah.

Zechariah prophesies the image of the messianic Prince of Peace, the Good Shepherd who would lay down His life for the flock. *Malachi* exhorts God's people to faithfulness and asserts the fatherhood of God over all nations. He foretells that God will appoint a forerunner, similar to the ancient prophet Elijah (or Elias) who will appear before the Messiah and prepare the world for the coming Day of the Lord.

Isaiah exhorts the people of God to place their confidence in the Lord, and to lead private and public lives which manifest this reliance. From Isaiah, we hear the prophecies of a Son to be born of a virgin, and of the Suffering

Servant—the Messiah—who would be led as an innocent sheep to the slaughter, and by whose stripes we would be healed. *Jeremiah* severely criticizes God’s people for abandoning the one true God and turning instead to the worship of idols. *Baruch* was appointed to be read on feast days as a confession of sins. In *Lamentations*, the author Jeremiah mourns the destruction of the holy city of Jerusalem by the Babylonians. The *Epistle of Jeremiah* is addressed to those about to be carried off into exile in Babylon.

Ezekiel, the prophet of the exiles, assures his hearers of the abiding presence of God amongst them, even in exile and servitude. Finally, *Daniel* writes an apocalyptic or mystical end-time prophecy which is filled with difficult and often obscure signs and symbols. In the Greek LXX, *Daniel* begins with the heroic story of Susanna and ends with the fascinating account of Bel and the Serpent.

These forty-nine God-inspired Old Testament books divided into four sections—books of the Law, of History, of Wisdom, and of Prophecy—which serve as an introduction to John the Baptist’s preparation of the world for the coming of the Messiah, who is Isaiah’s Suffering Servant, Zechariah’s Prince of Peace, and the Good Shepherd who lays down His life for the flock.

❧ THE NEW TESTAMENT ❧

The Four Gospels

Matthew, *Mark*, *Luke* and *John* recall the events in the life of Jesus Christ, Son of God and Son of Man. The first three are called the Synoptic Gospels, in that they set forth a “common viewpoint” of the chronology of events and the message of Christ in His life and ministry. *Matthew* addresses his gospel primarily to fellow Jews. *Mark* is likely the first gospel to be written, and speaks of Christ as servant of all (Mk 10:45). *Luke*, himself a physician, reveals the Incarnate Christ and His earthly ancestry. This Son of Man saves and heals the fallen race.

John, the last of the four gospels to be written, emphasizes the divinity of Christ, the eternal Son and Word of God, who became Man. John’s gospel further reveals seven miracles of Christ, not all of them in chronological order.

Acts

Written by St. Luke, these are the *Acts* (or accomplishments) of the *Apostles*, but mainly of Peter (chapters 1—12) and Paul (chapters 13—28). Acts chronicles the earliest history of the Church from Pentecost through approximately AD 65.

The Letters (or Epistles) of St. Paul

The first nine of Paul’s letters are written to churches. *Romans*, which begins this section, was the only letter Paul wrote to a community he had not

previously visited. Thus, the implication is that much of what he wrote to the church at Rome he preached in other places.

Most prominent of the cities of first century Greece was Corinth, a center of commerce, immorality and false religion. Predictably, this fledgling church would have to deal with these same matters. *First Corinthians* is therefore a corrective epistle calling for unity, virtue, forbearance, Eucharistic order and proper use of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. In contrast *Second Corinthians* recognizes the repentance within the church on the part of many, and St. Paul defends his apostolic authority.

In *Galatians*, Paul addresses several churches in Asia Minor, defending his apostleship and calling the faithful to live their lives in the strength of the Holy Spirit instead of in submission to the laws of the old covenant. *Ephesians* is a marvelous discourse on how the Church should conduct itself. This community is rich in dedication to Christ. Yet just a few decades later the Lord tells them, “you have left your first love” (Rev 2:4).

Philippians is the epistle of joy. Paul writes from a Roman prison, “Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!” (Php 4:4). *Colossians* presents Christ as “the head of the body, the church . . .” (Col 1:18), preeminent in all things.

First Thessalonians, the first letter St. Paul penned, was written to the believers at Thessalonica, a beautiful coastal city of Greece in about AD 51, shortly after Paul planted that Church. This is a letter of encouragement. *Second Thessalonians* acknowledges persecution and warns of lawlessness, urging the Christians to “stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught . . .” (2Th 2:15).

Next, Paul addresses the following letters to individuals. In *First Timothy*, the aging apostle speaks to his youthful understudy about effective oversight of the church. In *Second Timothy*, the last letter St. Paul wrote (see 2Ti 4:6–8), he encourages Timothy to “be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus” (2Ti 2:1). Paul is already in prison in Rome (1:8) awaiting martyrdom.

Titus is sent by Paul to Crete to set the church “in order,” and “appoint elders in every city” (Tts 1:5). If this sounds like the work of a bishop, it is (Tts 1:7, 8), and Titus is consistently named in early Church records as the first bishop of Crete. *Philemon* is a Christian slave-holder, and Paul writes him to receive back Onesimus (Phm 10–16), his runaway slave, who has become a Christian with Paul in Rome.

Hebrews is the last of the epistles attributed to St. Paul, but with little evidence it was actually written by Paul. It is a general letter to Jewish believers in Christ to continue on in the Faith. It assures them that Christ, the great High Priest in the heavenlies (Heb 8:1), is their once for all sacrifice for sin (Heb 10:10) and victor over death (Heb 12:1, 2).

The General Epistles

James, the brother of the Lord and first bishop of Jerusalem, writes to fellow Jews, “the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad” (Jam 1:1). His message? “Faith without works is dead” (Jam 1:20). Christianity is a belief that behaves.

First Peter, written by the first among the apostles, urges obedience to God and man, willingness to suffer for Christ’s sake, and effective pastoring of the flock. In *Second Peter*, the apostle discusses divine power for the faithful (deification), divine judgment for false teachers and the Day of the Lord.

Next, John the Theologian offers three general epistles. *First John* is a stirring personal testimonial to God’s forgiveness, His love for His children and His gift of eternal life. In *Second John*, he addresses an “elect lady and her children” (v. 1), urging them to obey the Lord’s commands and beware of deceivers. *Third John* commends Gaius and Demetrius, and warns against Diotrephes.

Finally, *Jude*, the Lord’s brother, writes a short letter exhorting the faithful to contend for the truth and to beware of the devil’s servants. He finishes with a stunning benediction.

Revelation

Written by St. John the Theologian, he entitles his book “The Revelation of Jesus Christ” (1:1). What the book of *Daniel* is to the Old Testament, *Revelation* is to the New Testament. Another title is the *Apocalypse*, which is a transliteration of the Greek word for “revelation” or “unveiling.” The book speaks prophetically both to current and future events, to judgment and salvation, and ends with the glorious New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven “as a bride adorned for her husband” (21:2).

INTRODUCING THE ORTHODOX CHURCH



The publication of *The Orthodox Study Bible* begs a question: exactly what is the Orthodox Church? Many people have heard of the Russian Orthodox Church which celebrated its 1000th birthday in 1988, or the Greek Orthodox Church which was born centuries earlier. But Orthodoxy itself—what is it, and what are its historic roots?

THE CHURCH IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

To answer the question, let us go back to the pages of the New Testament, specifically to the Book of Acts and the birth of the Church at Pentecost. For on that day the Holy Spirit descended on the twelve apostles in the Upper Room, and by afternoon some 3000 souls believed in Christ and were baptized. The Scriptures record that when the first Christian community began, “they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer” (Acts 2:42).

From Jerusalem, the faith in Christ spread throughout Judea, to Samaria (Acts 8:5–39), to Antioch and the Gentiles (Acts 11:19–26). We find new converts and new Churches throughout Asia Minor and the Roman Empire as recorded in Acts and the Epistles.

The Church, of course, was not simply another organization in Roman society. The Lord Jesus Christ had given the promise of the Holy Spirit “to lead you into all truth” (Jn 16:13). With the fulfillment of that promise beginning with Pentecost, the Church was born far beyond mere institutional status. She was not an organization with mystery, but a mystery with organization. St. Paul called the Church “a dwelling place of God in the Spirit” (Eph 2:22). The Church was a dynamic organism, the living Body of Jesus Christ. She made an indelible impact in the world, and those who lived in her life and faith were personally transformed.

But we also discover in the New Testament itself that the Church had her share of problems. All was not perfection. Some individuals even within the Church sought to lead her off the path the apostles established, and they had to be dealt with along with the errors they invented. Even whole local communities lapsed on occasion and were called to repentance. The Church in Laodicea is a vivid example (Rev 3:14–22). Discipline was administered for the sake of purity in the Church. But there was growth and maturation, even as the Church was attacked from within and without. The same Spirit who gave her birth gave her power for purity and correction, and she stood strong and grew, eventually invading the whole of the Roman Empire.

THE EARLY CENTURIES

As the Church moves from the pages of the New Testament and on into the succeeding centuries of her history, it is helpful to trace her growth and development in terms of specific categories. We shall look first at a category important for all Christian people: *doctrine*. Did she maintain the truth of God as given by Christ and His apostles? Second, what about *worship*? Is there a discernible way in which the people of God have offered a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving to Him? Third, we will consider Church *government*. What sort of polity did the Church practice?

1. *Doctrine*: Not only did the Church begin under the teaching of the apostles, but she was also instructed to “stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle” (2Th 2:15). The apostle Paul insisted that those matters delivered by him and his fellow apostles, both in person and in the writings that would come to be called the New Testament, be adhered to carefully. Thus, followed such appropriate warnings as “in the name of Jesus Christ . . . withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us” (2Th 3:6). The doctrines taught by Christ and His disciples are to be safeguarded by “the Church, the pillar and support of the truth” (1Ti 3:15) and are not open for renegotiation.

Midway through the first century, a dispute had arisen in Antioch over adherence to Old Testament laws. The matter could not be settled there; outside help was needed. The leaders of the Antiochian Church, the community which had earlier dispatched Paul and Barnabas as missionaries, brought the matter to Jerusalem for consideration by the apostles and elders there. The matter was discussed, debated, and a written decision was forthcoming.

It was James, the brother of the Lord and the first bishop of Jerusalem, who put forth the solution to the problem. This settlement, agreed to by all concerned at what is known as the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15:1–35), set the pattern for the use of Church councils in the centuries ahead to settle doctrinal and moral issues that arose. Thus, throughout the history of the Church we find scores of such councils, and on various levels, to settle matters of dispute and to deal with those who do not adhere to the Apostolic faith.

The first three hundred years of Christian history were marked by the appearance of certain heresies or false teachings such as secret philosophic schemes for the elite (Gnosticism), dazzling prophetic aberrations (Montanism), and grave errors regarding the three Persons of the Trinity (Sabellianism).

Then, in the early fourth century, a heresy with potential for Church-wide disruption appeared, propagated by one Arius, a presbyter in Alexandria, Egypt. He denied the eternity of the Son of God, claiming contrary to the apostles' doctrine that the Son was a created being who came into existence at a point in time and thus was not truly God. This deadly error struck the Church like a cancer. Turmoil spread almost everywhere. The first Church-wide, or Ecumenical, Council met in Nicea in AD 325 to address this issue. Some 318 bishops, along with many priests, deacons and laymen rejected the new teaching of Arius and his associates, upholding the apostles' doctrine of Christ, affirming the eternity of the Son and His consubstantiality with the Father. Their proclamation of the Apostolic teaching concerning Christ included a creed, which, with the additions concerning the Holy Spirit made in 381 at the Council of Constantinople, forms the document we today call the Nicene Creed.

Between the years 325 and 787, seven such Church-wide conclaves were held, all dealing first and foremost with some specific challenge to the Apostolic teaching about Jesus Christ. These councils, meeting in the cities of Nicea, Ephesus, Chalcedon, and Constantinople, are known as the Seven Ecumenical Councils.

For the first thousand years of Christian history, the entire Church, save for the heretics, embraced and defended the New Testament Apostolic faith. There was no consequential division. And this one faith, preserved through all trials, attacks and tests, this Apostolic doctrine, was called "the Orthodox faith."

2. **Worship:** Doctrinal purity was tenaciously maintained. But true Christianity is far more than adherence to a set of correct beliefs alone. The life of the Church is centrally expressed in her worship, adoration of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It was Jesus Himself Who told the woman at the well, "the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him" (Jn 4:23).

At the Last Supper, Jesus instituted the Eucharist, the communion service, when He took bread and wine, gave a blessing, and said to His disciples, "This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me" and "This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you" (Lk 22:19, 21). From the New Testament we know the Church participated in communion at least each Lord's Day (Acts 20:7, 11). From such first and second century sources as the *Didache*, the letters of St. Ignatius of Antioch, and St. Justin Martyr, we are assured the Eucharist is the very center of Christian worship from the Apostolic era on.

And just as the Law, the Psalms, and the Prophets were read in the Temple worship and the synagogue in Israel, so the Church also immediately gave high priority to the public reading of Scripture and to preaching in her worship, along with the Eucharistic meal.

Even before the middle of the first century, Christian worship was known by the term *liturgy* which literally means “the common work” or “the work of the people.” The early liturgy of the Church’s worship was composed of two essential parts, (1) the liturgy of the word, including hymns, Scripture reading, and preaching and (2) the liturgy of the faithful, composed of intercessory prayers, the kiss of peace, and the Eucharist. From virtually the beginning, Christian worship has had a definable shape or form which continues to this day.

Modern Christians advocating freedom from liturgy in worship are usually shocked to learn that spontaneity was never the practice in the ancient Church! A basic pattern or shape of Christian worship was observed from the start. And as the Church grew and matured, liturgy matured as well. Hymns, Scripture readings, and prayers were intertwined in the basic foundation. A clear, purposeful procession through the year, marking and joining in word, song, and praise the birth, ministry, death, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ, and sanctifying crucial aspects of Christian life and experience, was forthcoming. The Christian life was lived in reality in the worship of the Church. Far from being routine, the worship of the historic Church participated in the unfolding drama of the richness and mystery of the Gospel itself!

Further, specific landmarks in our salvation and walk with Christ were celebrated and sanctified. Baptism and the anointing with oil, or chrismation, were there from the start. Marriage, healing, confession of sin, and ordination to the ministry of the Gospel are other early rites in the Church. On each of these occasions Christians understood, in a great mystery, grace and power from God were being given according to the individual need of each person. The Church saw these events as holy moments in her life and called them mysteries or sacraments.

3. **Government:** No one seriously questions whether the apostles of Christ led the Church at her beginning. They had been given the commission to preach the Gospel (Mt 28:19, 20) and the authority to forgive or retain sins (Jn 20:23). Theirs was by no means a preaching-only mission! They built the Church itself under Christ’s headship. To govern it, three definite and permanent offices, as taught in the New Testament, were in evidence.

a. *The office of bishop.* The apostles themselves were the first bishops in the Church. Even before Pentecost, after Judas had turned traitor, Peter declared in applying Psalm 108:8, “Let his bishopric another take” (Acts 1:20). The word “bishopric” refers, of course, to the office of bishop and its use indicates the apostles themselves are bishops. Some have mistakenly argued the office of bishop was a later invention. Quite to the contrary, the apostles were themselves bishops, and they appointed bishops to succeed them to oversee the Church in each locality.

Occasionally, the objection is still heard that the office of bishop and presbyter were originally identical. The terms are used interchangeably in the New Testament while the apostles were present, the bishop being the presiding elder in a local church. But after the apostles’ deaths, the offices of bishop and presbyter soon became distinct throughout the Church. Ignatius of Antioch, consecrated bishop by AD 70 in the Church from which Paul and Barnabas had been sent out, writes just after the turn of the century that bishops appointed by the apostles, surrounded by their presbyters, were everywhere in the Church.

b. *The office of presbyter.* Elders or presbyters are mentioned very early in the life of the Church in Acts and the Epistles. It is evident that in each place a Christian community developed, elders were appointed by the apostles to pastor the people.

As time passed, presbyters were referred to in the short form of the word as “prests,” then as “priests,” in full view of the fact that the Old Covenant priesthood had been fulfilled in Christ and that the Church is corporately a priesthood of believers. The priest was not understood as an intermediary between God and the people nor as a dispenser of grace. It was the role of the priest to be the presence of Christ in the Christian community. And in the very

capacity of being the presence of the Chief Shepherd, Jesus Christ, the priest was to safeguard the flock of God.

c. *The office of deacon.* The third order or office in the government of the New Testament Church was the deacon. At first the apostles fulfilled this office themselves. But with the rapid growth of the Church, seven initial deacons were selected (Acts 6:1–7) to help carry the responsibility of service to those in need. It was one of these deacons, Stephen, who became the first martyr of the Church.

Through the centuries, the deacons have not only served the material needs of the Church, but have held a key role in the liturgical life of the Church as well. Often called “the eyes and ears of the bishop,” many deacons have become priests and ultimately entered the episcopal office.

The authority of the bishop, presbyter, and deacon was not anciently understood as being apart from the people, but always from among the people. In turn the people of God were called to submit to those who ruled over them (Heb 13:17), and they were also called to give their agreement to the direction of the leaders for the Church. On a number of occasions in history, that “Amen” was not forthcoming, and the bishops of the Church took note and changed course. Later in history, many Church leaders departed from the ancient model and usurped authority for themselves. In the minds of some this brought the ancient model into question. But the problem was not in the model but in the deviation from it.

It should also be mentioned that it was out of the ministry and life of the apostles that the people of God, the laity, were established in the Church. Far from being a herd of observers, the laity are vital in the effectiveness of the Church. They are the recipients and active users of the gifts and grace of the Spirit. Each of the laity has a role in the life and function of the Church. Each is to supply something to the whole (1Co 12:7). And it is the responsibility of the bishops, the priests, and the deacons to be sure that this is a reality for the laity.

The worship of the Church at the close of its first 1000 years had substantially the same shape from place to place. The doctrine was the same. The whole Church confessed one creed, the same in every place, and had weathered many attacks. The government of the Church was recognizably one everywhere. And this One Church was the Orthodox Church.

❧ DISAGREEMENTS BETWEEN WEST AND EAST ❧

Tensions began to mount as the first millennium was drawing to a close. While numerous doctrinal, political, economic, and cultural factors were working to separate the Church in an East-West division, two giant divisive issues ultimately emerged above others: (1) that one man, the Pope of Rome, considered himself the universal bishop of the Church and (2) the addition of a novel clause to the Church’s creed.

1. *The Papacy:* Among the Twelve, Saint Peter was early acknowledged as the leader. He was spokesman for the Twelve before and after Pentecost. He was the first bishop of Antioch and later bishop of Rome. No one challenged his role.

After the death of the apostles, as leadership in the Church developed, the bishop of Rome came to be recognized as first in honor, even though all bishops were equals. But after nearly 300 years, the bishop of Rome slowly began to assume to himself a role of superiority over the others, ultimately claiming to be the only true successor to Peter. The vast majority of the other bishops of the Church never questioned Rome’s primacy of honor, but they patently rejected the Roman bishop’s claim as the universal head of the Church on earth. This assumption of papal power became one major factor in rending the Roman Church, and all those it could gather with it, from the historic Orthodox Church.

2. *The Addition to the Creed:* A disagreement concerning the Holy Spirit also began to develop in the Church. Does the Holy Spirit proceed from the Father? Or, does He proceed from the Father and the Son?

Our Lord Jesus Christ teaches, “But when the Helper comes, Whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth Who *proceeds from the Father*, he will testify of Me” (Jn 15:26). This is the basic statement in all the New Testament about the Holy Spirit “proceeding,” and it is clear: He “proceeds from the Father.”

Thus, when the ancient council at Constantinople in AD 381 reaffirmed the Creed of Nicea (AD 325), it expanded that Creed to proclaim these familiar words: “And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Life-Giver, Who proceeds from the Father, Who is worshipped and glorified together with the Father and the Son. . . .”

But two hundred years later, at a local council in Toledo, Spain (AD 589), King Reccared declared, “the Holy Spirit also should be confessed by us and taught to proceed from the Father and the Son.” The King may have meant well, but he was contradicting Jesus’ teaching, confessed by the entire Church, concerning the Holy Spirit. Unfortunately, that local Spanish council agreed with his error.

Because of the teaching of the Holy Scriptures, believed by the Church at Nicea and at Constantinople and for centuries beyond, there is no reason to believe anything other than that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father.

But centuries later, in what was at least partially a politically motivated move, the Pope of Rome unilaterally changed the universal creed of the Church without an ecumenical council. Though this change was initially rejected in both East and West, even by some of Rome’s closest neighboring bishops, the Pope managed to eventually get the West to capitulate. The consequence, of course, in the Western Church has been the tendency to relegate the Holy Spirit to a lesser place than God the Father and God the Son. The change may appear small, but the consequences have proven disastrously immense. This issue, with the Pope departing from the Orthodox doctrine of the Church, became another instrumental cause separating the Roman Church from the historic Orthodox Church, the New Testament Church.

❧ THE GREAT SCHISM ❧

Conflict between the Roman Pope and the East mounted—especially in the Pope’s dealings with the bishop, or patriarch, of Constantinople. The Pope even went so far as to claim the authority to decide who should be the bishop of Constantinople, in marked violation of historical precedent. No longer operating within the government of the New Testament Church, the Pope appeared to be seeking by political means to bring the whole Church under his domination.

Bizarre intrigues followed, one upon the other, as a series of Roman popes pursued this unswerving goal of attempting to control all Christendom. Perhaps the most incredible incident of these political, religious, and even military schemes occurred in the year 1054. A Cardinal, sent by the Pope, slapped a document on the altar of the Church of Holy Wisdom in Constantinople during the Sunday worship, excommunicating the Patriarch of Constantinople from the Church!

The Pope, of course, had no legitimate right to do this. But the repercussions were staggering. Some dismal chapters of Church history were written during the next decades. The ultimate consequence of the Pope’s action was that the whole Roman Catholic Church ended up dividing itself from the New Testament faith of Orthodox Christianity. The schism has never been healed.

As the centuries passed conflict continued. Attempts at union failed and the Roman Church drifted farther and farther from its historic roots. There are inevitable consequences in deviating from the Church. The breaking away of Rome from the historic Orthodox Church would prove no exception.

❧ FURTHER DIVISIONS IN THE WEST ❧

During the centuries after AD 1054, the growing distinction between East and West was becoming indelibly marked in history. The East maintained the full stream of New Testament

faith, worship, and practice—all the while enduring great persecution. The Western or Roman Church, crippled because of its schism from the Orthodox Church, bogged down in many complex problems. Then, less than five centuries after Rome committed itself to its unilateral alteration of doctrine and practice, another upheaval was festering—this time not next door to the East, but inside the Western gates themselves.

Though many in the West had spoken out against Roman domination and practice in earlier years, now a little-known German monk named Martin Luther inadvertently launched an attack against certain Roman Catholic practices which ended up affecting world history. His famous Ninety-Five Theses were nailed to the Church door at Wittenburg in 1517. In a short time those theses were signalling the start of what came to be called in the West the Protestant Reformation. Luther sought an audience with the Pope but was denied, and in 1521 he was excommunicated from the Roman Church. He had intended no break with Rome. Its papal system of government, heavy with authority, refused conciliation. The door to future unity in the West slammed shut with a resounding crash.

The protests of Luther were not unnoticed. The reforms he sought in Germany were soon accompanied by demands of Ulrich Zwingli in Zurich, John Calvin in Geneva, and hundreds of others all over Western Europe. Fueled by complex political, social, and economic factors, in addition to religious problems, the Reformation spread like a raging fire into virtually every nook and cranny of the Roman Church. The ecclesiastical monopoly to which it had grown accustomed was greatly diminished, and massive division replaced its artificial unity. The ripple effect of that division impacts even our own day as the Protestant movement itself continues to split and shatter.

If trouble on the continent were not trouble enough, the Church of England was in the process of going its own way as well. Henry VIII, amidst his marital problems, replaced the Pope of Rome with himself as head of the Church of England. For only a few short years would the Pope ever again have ascendancy in England. And the English Church itself would soon experience great division.

As decade followed decade in the West, the many branches of Protestantism took various forms. There were even divisions that insisted they were neither Protestant nor Roman Catholic. All seemed to share a mutual dislike for the Bishop of Rome and the practice of his Church, and most wanted far less centralized forms of leadership. While some, such as the Lutherans and Anglicans, held on to certain forms of liturgy and sacrament, others, such as the Reformed Churches and the even more radical Anabaptists and their descendants, questioned and rejected many biblical ideas of hierarchy, sacrament, historic tradition, and other elements of Christian practice, no matter when and where they appeared in history, thinking they were freeing themselves of Roman Catholicism. To this day, many sincere, modern, professing Christians will reject even the biblical data which speaks of historic Christian practice, simply because they think such historic practices are “Roman Catholic.” To use the old adage, they threw the baby out with the bathwater without even being aware of it.

Thus, while retaining, in varying degrees, portions of foundational Christianity, neither Protestantism nor Catholicism can lay historic claim to being the true New Testament Church. In dividing from the Orthodox Christianity, Rome forfeited its place in the Church of the New Testament. In the divisions of the Reformation, the Protestants—as well-meaning as they might have been—failed to return to the New Testament Church.

THE ORTHODOX CHURCH TODAY

But that original Church, the Church of Peter and Paul and the apostles—despite persecution, political oppression, and desertion on certain of its flanks—miraculously carries on today the same faith and life of the Church of the New Testament. Admittedly, the style of Orthodoxy looks complicated to the modern Protestant eye, and understandably so. But given an historical understanding of how the Church has progressed, it may be seen that the simple

Christ-centered faith of the apostles is fully preserved in its doctrines, practices, services, and even in its architecture.

In Orthodoxy today, as in years gone by, the basics of Christian doctrine, worship, and government are never up for alteration. One cannot be an Orthodox priest, for example, and reject the divinity of Christ, His virgin birth, resurrection, ascension into heaven, and second coming. The Church simply has not left its course in nearly 2000 years. It is One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic. It is the New Testament Church. The gates of hell have not prevailed against it.

But Orthodoxy is also, in the words of one of her bishops, “the best kept secret in America.” Though there are more than 225 million Orthodox Christians in the world today, many in the West are not familiar with the Church. In North America, for example, the Orthodox Church has, until recently, been largely restricted to ethnic boundaries, not spreading much beyond the parishes of the committed immigrants that brought the Church to the shores of this continent.

Still, the Holy Spirit has continued His work, causing new people to discover this Church of the New Testament. People have begun to find Orthodox Christianity both through the writings of the early Church Fathers, and through the humble witness of contemporary Orthodox Christians. Significant numbers of evangelicals, Episcopalians and mainline Protestants are becoming Orthodox. And Orthodox student groups are springing up on campuses worldwide. The word is getting out.

What, then, is the Orthodox Church? It is the first Christian Church in history, the Church founded by the Lord Jesus Christ, described in the pages of the New Testament. Her history can be traced in unbroken continuity all the way back to Christ and His Twelve apostles.

And what is it that’s missing in the non-Orthodox Churches—even the best of them? Fullness. For the fullness of the New Testament faith is to be found only in the New Testament Church. Being in the Church does not guarantee all those in it will take advantage of the fullness of the faith. But the fullness of the faith is there for those who do.

For persons who seriously desire the fullness of Orthodox Christianity, action must be taken. There must be a return to this Church of the New Testament. Being aware of this ancient Church is not enough. In our time people have had ample opportunity to investigate and decide about the Roman Catholic faith, the Baptist, the Lutheran, and so on. But relatively few have taken a serious look at the Orthodox Church. Three specific suggestions will provide those interested with a tangible means of becoming acquainted with Orthodox Christianity on a personal basis.

1. **Visit:** Look up “Orthodox” or “Eastern Orthodox” in the “Church” section of your Yellow Pages. Ask the whereabouts of the nearest Orthodox parish. Pay a visit—several visits. Meet the priest, and ask him to help you study and learn. And be prepared to exercise patience—sometimes a portion of the Liturgy is not in English! But the Service Book in the pew will help.
2. **Read:** There are a number of books and periodicals immensely helpful to people seeking to learn about the Orthodox Church. *The Orthodox Church* by Kallistos Ware (Penguin); *For the Life of the World* by Alexander Schmemmann (St. Vladimir Seminary Press); *The Apostolic Fathers* edited by Jack N. Sparks (Light and Life Publishers), and *Becoming Orthodox* by Peter E. Gillquist, *Divine Energy* by Jon E. Braun, and *AGAIN Magazine* (all by Conciliar Press).
3. **Write:** The people at Conciliar Press (P.O. Box 76, Ben Lomond, CA 95005-0076) have volunteered to answer questions regarding the Orthodox Church from *Orthodox Study Bible* readers, and to suggest further reading. Send your name and address, with a request for information.

In a day when Christians are realizing anew the centrality and importance of worship, of the Church as the body of Christ, and the need to preserve true Christian faith, the doors of

Orthodoxy are open wide. The invitation is extended to “come and see.” Examine her faith, her worship, her history, her commitment to Christ, her love for God the Father, her communion with the Holy Spirit.

For two thousand years the Orthodox Church has by God’s mercy kept the faith delivered once for all to the saints. Within her walls is the fullness of the salvation which was realized when “God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (Jn 3:16).

THE
OLD TESTAMENT



THE FIRST BOOK OF MOSES

GENESIS

Author—Traditionally, both Jews and Christians believe Moses is the author and compiler of Genesis and of each of the first five books of the Bible, the Pentateuch.

Date—Genesis was written during Israel’s forty years of wandering in the wilderness, in the time between the crossing of the Red Sea and the entrance into Canaan.


Major Theme—*The early history of man and of Israel.* Genesis, which means “origin,” is divided into two parts. The first is the account of the creation of the world and the beginning of the human race with Adam and Eve, and the history of their descendants. The second part of Genesis concerns the early history of Israel, starting with the three patriarchs of the Hebrews, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the twelve tribes that were their descendants. God created all things good, and although His creation rebelled and sinned against Him, He still loves and cares for His people.

Background—Genesis covers the longest time span of any book in the Bible, stretching from the creation of the world to the coming of the Hebrews to Egypt. The first three chapters of Genesis are reflected in the last three chapters of Revelation, the Alpha and Omega of writings “given by inspiration of God” (2Ti 3:16).

Outline

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| I. The Early History of Man (1:1—11:27) | II. The Early History of Israel (12:1—50:26) |
| A. Creation and the Fall of man
(1:1—5:32) | A. The patriarchs and tribes of Israel
(12:1—36:42) |
| B. Judgment of man by the Flood and the
Tower of Babel (6:1—11:32) | B. Israel in Egypt (37:1—50:26) |

CREATION

 "We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth, and of all things visible and invisible." These opening words of the Nicene Creed, the central doctrinal statement of Christianity, affirm that the One True God is the source of everything that exists—both physical and spiritual, both animate and inanimate. The Holy Scriptures begin with a similarly striking assertion: "In the beginning God made heaven and earth." St. Basil the Great declares:


In the fear that human reasonings may make you wander from the truth, Moses has anticipated inquiry by engraving in our hearts, as a seal and a safeguard, the awesome name of God: 'In the beginning God created.' It is He—beneficent Nature, Goodness without measure, a worthy object of love for all beings endowed with reason, the beauty the most to be desired, the origin of all that exists . . .—it is He who 'in the beginning created heaven and earth.'

The ever-existent Almighty God was not forced to create the universe. Rather, in His goodness and lovingkindness, He freely chose to do so. And the fact that the Lord created the universe *out of nothing* stands in clear contrast to the creation myths of the surrounding cultures in the ancient world.

The central role of Jesus Christ, the Word of the Father, in the creation of all things is plainly stated in the first chapter of the apostle John's gospel, where it is written, "In the beginning was the Word, . . . All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made." And the specific role of the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Undivided Trinity, in the creation of the world is seen in Genesis 1:2 (see also Ps 103:30; 32:6).

Regarding questions about the scientific accuracy of the Genesis account of creation, and about various viewpoints concerning evolution, the Orthodox Church has not dogmatized any particular view. What is dogmatically proclaimed is that the One Triune God created everything that exists, and that man was created in a unique way and is alone made *in the image and likeness of God* (Gn 1:26, 27). The Church Fathers also consistently affirm that each species of the animate creation came into existence instantaneously, at the command of God, with its seed within itself.

The development of life was not by accident. Rather, Supreme Intelligence and Impenetrable Wisdom were at work in the creation and sustenance of all that exists. In discussing various scientific theories of his day, St. Basil the Great declared, "If there is anything in this [or any other] system which seems probable to you, keep your admiration for the source of such perfect order—the wisdom of God." He also wrote, "We must still remain faithful to the principle of true religion and recognize that all that exists is sustained by the Creator's power."

The repeated affirmation "and God saw that it was good" in Genesis 1 underscores the intrinsic, fundamental *goodness* of matter and the whole created order, even after the Fall. This understanding is the basis for a sacramental world-view—that the created order not only is good, but also can be a means for communion with God, by virtue of being created by the All-Good God. Moreover, the astounding beauty, intricate order, and sublime harmony of all aspects of Creation, as well as the tremendously vast expanse of the universe, are intended to draw mankind to an awareness of and appreciation for the Creator, and to the worship of Him—and Him alone (see Ps 18:1-4; Rom 1:20). 

🌿 **The Creation** 🌿

In the beginning God made heaven and earth.¹ ²The earth was invisible and unfinished; and darkness was over the deep. The Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the water.³ Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light.⁴ God saw the light; it was good; and God divided the light from the darkness.⁵ God called the light Day; the darkness He called Night; and there was evening and morning, one day.

⁶Then God said, “Let there be a firmament in the midst of the water, and let it divide the water from the water”; and it was so. ⁷Thus God made the firmament, and God divided the water under the firmament from the water above the firmament. ⁸So God called the firmament Heaven, and God saw that it was good; and there was evening and morning, the second day.

⁹Then God said, “Let the water under heaven be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear”; and it was so. The water under heaven was gathered into its places, and the dry land appeared. ¹⁰So God called the dry land Earth, and the gathering together of the waters He called Seas; and God saw that it was good. ¹¹Then God said, “Let the earth bring forth the herb of grass, bearing seed according to its kind and likeness. Let the fruit tree bear fruit, whose seed is in itself according to its kind on earth.” It was so. ¹²Thus the earth brought forth the herb of grass, bearing seed according to its kind and likeness. The

fruit tree bore fruit, whose seed is in itself according to its kind on earth. God saw that it was good. ¹³So evening and morning were the third day.

¹⁴Then God said, “Let there be lights in the firmament of heaven for illumination to divide day from night.” ¹⁵Let them be for signs and seasons, and for days and years. Let them be for illumination in the firmament of heaven to give light on the earth.” It was so. ¹⁶Then God made two great lights: the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night. He made the stars also. ¹⁷God set them in the firmament of heaven to give light on the earth, ¹⁸and to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness. God saw that it was good. ¹⁹So evening and morning were the fourth day.

²⁰Then God said, “Let the waters bring forth creatures having life, and let birds fly above the earth across the face of heaven’s firmament.” It was so. ²¹Thus God made great sea creatures and every living thing that moves with which the waters abounded, according to their kind, and every winged bird according to its kind. God saw that it was good. ²²God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on earth.” ²³So evening and morning were the fifth day.

²⁴Then God said, “Let the earth bring forth the living creature according to its kind: the quadrupeds, the creeping things, and the wild animals of the earth according

1:1 God the Father made heaven and earth. “I believe in one God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth” (Creed).

1:2 The Spirit of God is the Holy Spirit (BasilG; Eph5). He proceeds from the Father, and is “the Lord and Giver of Life” (Creed). Since He is Lord, He is coequal with the Father, and is His Coworker in making heaven and earth.

1:3 God the Father spoke to His Word and Only-begotten Son, through whom He made the light (AthanG). Since the Son, too, is Lord, He is coequal with the Father, and is His Coworker in making heaven and earth.

The Holy Fathers teach that the Father made heaven and earth through the Son and in the Holy Spirit. Thus, the Holy Trinity made heaven and earth, and the Church sings, “We glorify the Father, we exalt the Son, and we worship the Holy Spirit—the indivisible Trinity who exists as One—the Light and Lights, the Life and Lives, who grants light and life to the ends of the world” (CanonAnd).

1:4–25 Since the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit made heaven and earth, They also made everything mentioned in these verses.




1:1–3 This passage is read during Vespers on Great and Holy Saturday.

1:1–13 This passage is read during Monday Vespers in the first week of Great Lent. It is also read on the Eve of the Feast of the Nativity, during Vespers at the Feast of Theophany (Epiphany), and at Vespers for Great and Holy Saturday.

1:14–23 This passage is read during Tuesday Vespers in the first week of Great Lent.

THE HOLY TRINITY

 The Holy Trinity is revealed both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament. In the Old Testament, the Trinity is revealed in subtle ways; in the New Testament, the Trinity is revealed fully and plainly, beginning at the Baptism of our Lord.

The Holy Trinity is one God in three Persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. These Persons are distinct, but not separate, and are not three gods. They are One God because They are one in essence or nature. The Father is the unbegotten Fountainhead of Deity. The Son is eternally begotten of the Father (Jn 1:18; 3:16; 16:28). The Holy Spirit is the Helper (Jn 14:16) and Spirit of Truth (Jn 14:17; 16:13), Who proceeds from the Father (Jn 15:26).

THE HOLY TRINITY CREATED THE WORLD

Genesis 1:1—God the Father created the heavens and the earth. The Creed says: “I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.”

Genesis 1:2—The Spirit of God is the Holy Spirit. He hovered over creation in creative power and equality with the Father. He co-created with the Father.

Genesis 1:3—As the Word of God, the Son made the light (Jn 1:1–3). With creative power and equality with the Father, He also co-created with the Father and the Spirit.

Genesis 1:26—The pronouns “Us” and “Our” reveal a plurality of divine Persons. These Persons are the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit operating in complete unity out of the one divine Nature.

THE HOLY TRINITY SAVES THE WORLD

Isaiah 63:16—The Father is our Redeemer. He not only created the world but redeems it as well.

Psalms 2:7, 8—The Father’s decree reveals the Son as inheriting the world. This inheritance is the people saved by the Son.

Isaiah 6:1–3—The words “Holy, Holy, Holy” declare the three Persons who save us. The name “Lord” declares the one essence of the Three.

Isaiah 44:3—The Father pours out His Spirit on people like water on dry ground. The Holy Spirit quenches the thirst of the person who thirsts for salvation.

Isaiah 48:16, 17—The Son declares that the Father and the Spirit sent Him to redeem the world. Although the Son alone became a Man, all three Persons save mankind.

THE NEW TESTAMENT AFFIRMS THE HOLY TRINITY IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

John 1:1–3—The Word is the Son of God, who was present with the Father at the beginning of creation. He was Co-worker with the Father in creating the world.


John 8:58—Jesus identifies Himself as having existed before Abraham. Before His coming in the flesh as Man, Jesus existed as the eternal Son of the Father, for He is begotten from the Father before all time and ages. He appeared to Moses in the burning bush and proclaimed Himself as “I Am” (Ex 3).

Acts 2:17—The Holy Spirit’s descent at Pentecost affirms His presence in the Old Testament (Joel 2:28–32).

Hebrews 1:8–10—This Scripture affirms the Father is speaking to the Son in Psalms 44:7 and 101:26–28, in which the Father acknowledges the Son as God and Creator of the world. For the Son was the Father’s Co-worker in creation.

THE INCARNATE SON FULLY REVEALS THE HOLY TRINITY

Luke 1:35—At the Annunciation, the Holy Spirit, the “power” of God the Father (“the Highest”), overshadowed the Virgin Mary; and she gave birth to the Son of God in His flesh.

Matthew 3:16–17—When the Son of God was baptized in the Jordan by John, the Father’s voice was heard from heaven, and the Holy Spirit descended on Him like a dove. As the main hymn for the Feast of Theophany says, “When You, O Lord, were baptized in the Jordan, the worship of the Trinity was made manifest.” 

to their kind." It was so.[□] ²⁵So God made the wild animals of the earth according to their kind, the cattle according to their kind, and all the creeping things on earth according to their kind. God saw that it was good. ²⁶Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness. Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of heaven, over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that moves on the earth."[†] ²⁷So God made man; in the image of God He made him; male and female He made them. ²⁸Then God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of heaven, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

²⁹Then God said, "Behold, I have given you every seed-bearing herb that sows seed on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food. ³⁰I also give every green plant as food for all the wild animals of the earth, for all the birds of heaven, and for every-

thing that creeps on the earth in which is the breath of life." It was so. ³¹Then God saw everything He had made, and indeed, it was very good. So evening and morning were the sixth day.[†]

2 Thus heaven and earth and all their adornment were finished.[†] ²And on the seventh day God finished the works He made, and He rested on the seventh day from all the works He made. ³Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His works God began to make.

⁴This is the book of the genesis of heaven and earth when they were made, in the day the Lord God made heaven and earth,^{†□} ⁵before any plant of the field was on earth and before any herb of the field sprang up. For God had not sent rain on the earth, and there was no man to till the ground; ⁶but a fountain came up from the ground and watered the whole face of the earth. ⁷Then God formed man out of dust from the ground, and breathed in his face the breath of life; and man became a living soul.[†]

1:26–30 The Holy Trinity also made man. God the Father is speaking to God the Son (JohnChr), and He uses the personal pronouns **Us** and **Our**. These pronouns indicate three distinct Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, as noted in 1:1–3.

The word **image** is in the singular, and shows the three distinct Persons of the Holy Trinity are one in nature and undivided. For it does *not* say, "Our images" (HilryP). Therefore, the Holy Trinity is one undivided nature in three distinct Persons.

Man is not one in nature with the Holy Trinity. But He was made in the image and likeness of the Holy Trinity; and he was made male and female. Therefore, the dignity of each man and each woman is this image and likeness.

1:31 Everything God made, including man, is **very good**, because God is good. Nothing He made is therefore evil in itself. So then, human nature is good in itself. But sin is a free choice of man's will, and it is contrary both to God's nature and human nature.

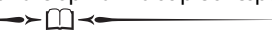
2:1–3 God finished the making of heaven and earth for man's sake. He rested from His creative activity on the seventh day to show His love and providential care for man, and to invite man to enjoy this Sabbath-rest. For as Jesus said, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath" (Mk 2:27).

Man failed to keep this Sabbath-rest. But Jesus fulfilled it for man by resting in the tomb on Great and Holy Saturday, after He said on the cross, "It is finished" (Jn 19:30). For He destroyed sin and death, and rose again on the first day of the week. Through His saving work on man's behalf, He is man's Sabbath-rest, and He now invites all to find rest in Himself (Mt 11:28–30).

2:4 Here the Book of Genesis refers to itself by name.

2:7 God formed Adam's body **out of dust from the ground**. The **breath of life** is the grace of the Holy Spirit, the Giver of Life (the Creed). God breathed the breath of life into man's body, and he became a **living soul**. Therefore, Adam was a living soul because he possessed a body, a soul, and the grace of the Holy Spirit.

After He rose from the dead, Jesus breathed on His disciples, and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit" (Jn 20:22). For man failed to keep the grace of the Spirit, but through His Resurrection Jesus supplies His disciples abundantly with the life-giving grace of the Spirit. A disciple's responsibility is to live by this grace.



1:24—2:3 This passage is read during Wednesday Vespers in the first week of Great Lent.

2:4–19 This passage is read during Thursday Vespers in the first week of Great Lent.

The Garden of Eden

⁸Then the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man He formed.[†] ⁹Besides this, God caused every tree beautiful to the sight and good for food to grow from the ground. Also, in the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of learning the knowledge of good and evil. ¹⁰Now a river went out of Eden to water the garden, and from there it separated into four heads. ¹¹The name of the first is Pishon. It circles all the land of Havilah, where there is gold. ¹²And the gold of that land is good. The carbuncle and the emerald are there as well. ¹³The name of the second river is Gihon. It circles all the land of Ethiopia. ¹⁴The name of the third river is Tigris. It flows over against the Assyrians. And the fourth river is Euphrates.

¹⁵Then the Lord God took the man He formed and put him in the garden to tend and keep it. ¹⁶And the Lord God commanded Adam, saying, “You may eat food from every tree in the garden; ¹⁷but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you may not eat; for in whatever day you eat from it, you shall die by death.”

¹⁸And the Lord God said, “It is not good for man to be alone. I will make him a helper comparable to him.”[†] ¹⁹Also, God formed out of the ground all the wild animals of the field and all the birds of heaven, and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them. Thus whatever Adam

called each living creature, that was its name. ²⁰So Adam gave names to all the cattle, to all the birds of heaven, and to all the wild animals of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him.[□] ²¹Thus God brought a trance upon Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and filled up the flesh in its place. ²²Then the Lord God built the rib He took from Adam into a woman, and brought her to him. ²³So Adam said, “This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh. She shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. ²⁴For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh.” ²⁵Now the two were naked, both Adam and his wife, and were not ashamed.

The Fall of Mankind

3 Now the serpent was more cunning than all the wild animals the Lord God made on the earth. And he said to the woman, “Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat from every tree of the garden?’”[†] ²And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat the fruit from the trees of the garden; ³but from the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden, God said, ‘You shall not eat from it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.’” ⁴Then the serpent said to the woman, “You shall not die by death. ⁵For God knows in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like

2:8–17 God gave man a place and a law (AthanG). The place was Paradise, and the law was the commandment given in 2:16, 17. Man was to obey this commandment through the grace of God the Word. If he was obedient, he would enjoy the blessings of Paradise. But if he were to disobey the commandment, he would die and his body would decay in the grave (“die by death,” AthanG).

2:18–25 God, not man, established the law of marriage; therefore, marriage is holy. In the marriage union, the husband and wife become **one flesh** (v. 24), which St. Paul calls “a great mystery” (Eph 5:32). This mystery is so great and wonderful that a man will leave his father and mother with their blessing, and be joined to a woman in marriage. In this joining, he will be devoted to her with sacrificial love and devotion, and she to him.

This great mystery points to the greater mystery: the marriage of Christ and His Bride, the Church (Eph 5:22–33). For He left His Father and became Man to seek a Bride. He loved His Bride and gave Himself for her. And in his divine vision of the new heaven and earth, the apostle John saw this Bride, the “New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband” (Rev 21:1, 2).

3:1–7 The **serpent** is the devil (2Co 11:3; Rev 12:9), and he tempted Eve. He contradicted God’s commandment (2:16, 17) by denying death and decay in the grave as the penalty for disobedience (**you shall not die by death**). He also tempted Eve with the promise of deification (**you will be like gods, knowing good and evil**). But deification comes through obedience to God, not through disobedience. Nevertheless, Eve was deceived, and thus disobeyed God. She, in turn, gave the fruit to her husband, and he ate. In his disobedience, he willed contrary to the will of God, and thus ate. His free will was the first thing to suffer in the Fall, and thus is the first thing that needs healing in man (JohnDm).



2:20—3:20 This passage is read during Friday Vespers in the first week of Great Lent.