

# THE NARTHEX

January-February 2017  
'And the disciples were first called  
Christians in Antioch' (Acts 11:26)

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## Culture Change

The buried remains of a man from the Neolithic period (New Stone Age) found in 2002 near the famous site of Stonehenge, revealed some surprising results. The so-called 'Amesbury Archer' (2470-2280BC) as he is known, when subjected to analysis of the teeth, showed that he had not been a local man at all. In fact the chemical tests showed that he had spent his early years not in what is now Wiltshire where he was buried, but rather in Switzerland. Archaeologists class him as one the *Beaker People*, a culture introduced into Britain at the time from elsewhere. After the Ice Age, people settled in these islands from about 9000BC. Around 4000BC agriculture had arrived, gradually changing the hunter-gatherer culture into one of settled communities, identifying themselves, it appears, with specific landscapes and bound together by ties of clan and family. These were groups of people who recognised the community in which they lived as all important with relationships beyond the temporal that included the revered ancestors beyond. This was the culture that was able to build Stonehenge (c. 3000-2500BC).

The Beaker people and, of course, the 'Amesbury Archer' were, however, very different. The evidence dug from the ground by archaeologists suggests that their culture was focused far more on the individual, as represented by the burial of grave goods indicating someone's status in this life.

The British are and have long been described as a mongrel race. Waves of differing cultures have crossed to these shores. If we leave aside those prehistoric people who were here from before and after the last Ice Age, we find Celts coming up from Spain and then moving out into mainland Europe from Britain: there are the legions of Imperial Rome: Syrians and Spaniards manning the demarcation line of Hadrian's Wall. There are the piratical raids of Picts and Saxons when the empire departed and the settlement and indeed, a new culture brought by Angles and Jutes appearing in the eastern side of Britain, whilst the Celts kept their old ways to the west.

So we have from around 500AD the very beginnings of what we call 'England.' What is remarkable about all this change is that mitochondrial DNA analysis of human remains found in Somerset from 13000 years

ago, shows a match with people alive today in the same region! The old idea of vast hordes of invaders coming in and changing the population at various intervals can no longer be seriously held but what does change is culture.

It might seem odd to have this long preamble into the realms of archaeology in what is, after all, a religious publication. In fact, I draw your attention to it, not just because archaeology really interests me but, like all good history, it tells us something about ourselves in the present.

It is, of course, language which is the real 'messenger' of a culture. I have on my bookshelves a large French/English dictionary; the English section is longer because, unlike French which developed mostly from Latin, English came from a base of Anglo-Saxon with added layers of Danish, Norman French and the further influences of Latin and Greek.

I bring all this to your minds this time because it strikes me that we are living through yet another of those cultural changes, only this time, far from there being one new set of ideas, like many countries in Western Europe, Britain is being subjected to pressure from a variety of global influences.

We may observe this particularly in the area of religious life. From the time of Roman rule right up to the Norman Conquest there was a thousand years of united Catholic-Orthodoxy before the Western patriarchate drifted away.

Britain was a part of Western Catholicism for about 500 years but then, the Protestant Reformation profoundly influenced the British character for another 400 years; it was the kind of world in which I was brought up. But what is very obvious now is that it is fast melting away, superseded by what we might call secular materialism tinged with elements of pagan superstition - something that has been developing for at least the last 150 years.

Recently it has been shown that Christianity has seen a marked expansion in cities like London but this has obviously been brought about by the arrival of immigrants. There are, of course, Polish Catholics and various forms of, largely, Pentecostal Protestants, largely arrivals from the African continent. Most of these,

though, have little effect or influence over the majority of the native British.

Then there is Islam in a variety of types but here - and we must be honest - there is for many in Britain (and especially across the Channel in France) a distinct feeling of unease. This is clearly for historical as well as contemporary reasons. It has become fashionable amongst the *Liberal Elite* to blame western ambivalence towards the followers on Mohammad of Medina on western aggression during the Crusades in the Middle Ages. This conveniently ignores the fact that from its early days the armies of Islam invaded Europe first, through Spain, only to be stopped eventually by the great Charles Martel at the Battle of Tours in 732AD. But Islam is now evidently present in Europe with a young and growing population at a time when in many countries the indigenous populations are growing older through having smaller families. Clearly, in a world of globalised communications all sorts of influences have and are arriving in Britain but Islam presents something clearly different. The politicians who over the last forty years have encouraged Muslim immigration, rarely thought beyond the next election. Those who have opened their borders to the current stream of refugees might well be commended for their humanity but actions have consequences and so do moral actions: what effect will such numbers have, say, in thirty years' time, according to the laws of mathematics?

Others who have come here from abroad, whether from the Caribbean, from Europe or parts of Africa, have largely been able to blend in with life in Britain but this is because they have been brought up within Christian cultures. Similarly, Sikh and Hindu communities have managed to flourish here but the Muslim communities appear to present a real puzzle. My fear is that, when a critical mass is reached in terms of the number of Muslims, a liberal democracy will be

faced with a real problem. Modern politicians, who know little about religion and imagine fondly that all *people of faith* desire the same thing, are profoundly naïve. Islam, unlike any other religion, is a polity, a constitutional format with its own system of law; it has a theocratic approach to the public sphere. In other words, Islam holds to the view that religion must ultimately preside over political life and institutions by means of control, not just by a general moral influence: we see this in Iran, for example. By contrast, Christ taught that we render to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God. In the old Christian Byzantine Empire, Caesar was indeed the appointee of God - as St Constantine the Great came to see - and indeed, the Patriarch of Constantinople could always 'speak truth unto power' but there was never a conception that the empire and the Kingdom of God were one and the same thing. In Christianity, the Kingdom is always *not of this world*; this is not so in Islam.

Although largely unrecognized by the post-modern Liberal Elite, the ideals of western democracy which have developed over the last two centuries, were profoundly influenced by a Christian culture. Drawing on the biblical idea that Mankind is made in the image and likeness of God, humanity has dominion over creation as the steward and regent of God. From this has developed a deep awareness of the value of the individual within community: a synthesis and blending of those ancient ideas found among the Neolithic and Beaker people of these islands. Here we can trace the political idea of a representative democracy living under the protective rule of Law in a fallen world. On the other hand, it should not surprise us that instances of electoral fraud in recent years have occurred Asian communities in Birmingham and Tower Hamlets in London.

Though it has been fashionable to blame western foreign policy for the ills of the Middle East, what is rarely noticed is that the current disturbances are the symptoms of a deep crisis within Islam itself, facing its own pressures for secularization ever since the collapse of the Ottoman Empire.

The point of what I have written is not just to be aware of the possibility of further disturbances, terrorism and civil unrest during the next thirty years - within our children's lifetime but also to take our Christian vocation even further. Our prayers, our discipleship, our witness is not a pass-time, hobby or leisure activity. We have a calling to be the 'salt of the earth,' to season this land with our Christian and especially Orthodox culture; to maintain a truly Christian ethos in the face of other,

alien influences whether secular or religious. It was always understood in old *Christendom* that the duty of the anointed Sovereign was to promote Christianity and to protect the Church without ever confusing Church and State. For all its problems we can see something of this developing currently in post-communist Russian, no matter how disparaged by the western media. But the question remains: what will happen to the ancient Christian culture of this land? Let us be honest: we have already lost the democratic and demographic battle in the realm of public morality. For all that there was indeed hidden hypocrisy in the past, still in the areas of medical care, sexuality and integrity, Christian values were generally accepted but not so now. It will not be long before euthanasia (an Orwellian bit of *newspeak* if ever there were!) is legalized. (Already in Wales it is legal for the state to claim the bodily organs of the deceased for use in transplants if their citizens have not 'opted out,' as if the state owned your body.)

This is not a tirade against Muslims themselves or even against the hordes of the secularized English but it is a contradiction of their ideologies. Our contention is not against Muslims themselves nor is it any form of racial antagonism - it is against Islam itself and it is a theological dispute. Let me repeat that: it is a theological dispute. We are not Universalists; we do not teach that everyone will be saved. The false prophets, whether religious or secular do not save; without Christ there is no way into the Kingdom of Heaven.

Therefore, I contend that part of our vocation is to promote, maintain and teach our faith and reaffirm its cultural roots in this country; we cannot rely on the state to do this for us. Archaeology and modern genetics have shown that race and nationality have little to do with a bloodline but they have everything to do with an identity with sense of place, a common language and a way of life.

Meanwhile, the disintegrating fissures of multiculturalism are spreading further through other micro-cultures, each living within the echoing walls of its own ghetto, mostly founded on the new *identity politics*, each *community*, as it calls itself, claiming autonomy from the whole: witness, for example, the challenge to the French concept of *laïcité* that once bound the nation. I am not a admirer of the EU (a misguided and corrupted idea that belongs back in the twentieth century) but I thank God for the Romanians, Greeks, Bulgarians, Poles, Eritreans and others who have brought Britain's ancient Christianity back here. My prayer is that the coming feast of the Theophany will inspire us in the incomprehensibly great task of re-hallowing this land.

*Fr Chrysostom*

## SERVICES

*Vespers is normally served on Saturday's at 5.00pm in the Saints of Britain chapel. Fr. Chrysostom is available for Confession afterwards.*

### January

Sun 1st Circumcision of Our Lord  
St Basil the Great  
Divine Liturgy 10.30am

Fri 6th Holy Theophany of Our Lord  
Divine Liturgy and  
Blessing of Waters 11.00am



Sun 8th 29th after Pentecost  
Divine Liturgy 10.30am

Sun 15th 30th after Pentecost  
Sunday of the 10 Lepers  
Divine Liturgy 10.30am

Sun 22nd 31st after Pentecost  
Sunday of Zacchaeus  
Divine Liturgy 10.30am

Sun 29th 32nd after Pentecost  
The Canaanite Woman  
Divine Liturgy 10.30am

### February

Thurs 2nd The Meeting of Our Lord in the Temple  
Divine Liturgy 11.00am

Beginning of the Triodion  
Sun 5th Publican & the Pharisee  
Divine Liturgy 10.30am  
*Fast-free week*

Sun 12th The Prodigal Son  
Divine Liturgy 10.30am

Sun 19th The Last Judgement  
Sunday of Meatfare

Mon 20th *Meat-fast begins*

Sun 26th Sunday of Cheesfare  
Expulsion of Adam  
Divine Liturgy 10.30am

Mon 27th **Start of Great Lent**