

The believers were first called Christians at Antioch ACTS, 9:26

September-October 2014

OUR FUTURE

Once again, I should like to thank you all for the many gifts, cards and greetings I received on the occasion of my sixtieth birthday back in July. Not least, the party that followed the Liturgy on that Sunday was a real surprise. This had all been planned by you and I was totally unaware, so thank you once more. Arriving at such a time in my life and moreover, your kindness, has led me to reflect much on what has happened, not just in these past few days but also in the journey of my own life: all that has brought us together and where we are now.

This year, 19 years have passed since Presbytera and I were received into the Orthodox Church: it was in the September that I was ordained in Paris. Before that, as an Anglican minister of 16 years standing, I had organised the gathering of likeminded Anglicans who, at that time were considering becomina Orthodox. Fr. David Sennet of Doncaster helped me in this. Meetings ensued: twice Birmingham and once at High Wycombe. We were greatly assisted in this by an Orthodox married couple, Nicholas and Nina Chapman. Out of this grew a nucleus of clergy who eventually, after many ups and downs. advances and disappointments, met with his late Beatitude, Ignatius IV, Patriarch of Antioch in Paris - one of the most remarkable encounters in my life. This was in September 1994. From this time began the history of our current Archdiocese, starting out as Deanery, led by the Archpriest, Fr. Michael Harper.

The Orthodox Church of St. Dunstan of Canterbury, Poole

The Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese of The British Isles and Ireland Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East

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Our own parish was established as a mission in 2006, our own history very much tied up with our use of, and of course, for a time, our 'exile' from the building. Here I must record, once again, our thanks to Fr. Marcus of St. Edmund Campion's RC Church who gave us shelter for a time. (Sadly, Fr. Marcus, a good friend of our parish, has now left the area for St. Joseph's RC Church at Havant and we wish him 'many years' in his new ministry.)

As many of you know, I am hoping to be able to take partial retirement from my teaching career before too long which will enable me to give more time as pastor of this parish. When we consider what comes next, there are four areas that I think we need to be aware of.

Firstly, our future is very much tied up with our new archdiocese of Great Britain and Ireland. Αt the time publication, no announcement has been made as to our first Metropolitan but I feel certain that once we have our own archbishop, the future direction of our mission here will be much clearer. Secondly, the Foundation and the parish will continue to work for the restoration of our church building. We have recently been acknowledged as a 'church in danger' by English Heritage. This is to be welcomed as it means we are will be able to apply for grants towards the major repairs. Thirdly, we need to consider the future development of our parish life; what more we might do to consolidate our life together and further our own spiritual growth. Not least in this respect, that this

implies attention to what God wills for us and particularly in terms of our primary purpose: the bringing back, once again, of the British people to the ancient faith of this land.

Finally, with mention of my possible retirement, we need to remember that I shall not be here for ever. With the archdiocese being relatively new and small, the matter of succession presses upon us. The original middle-aged band of clergy who initially started the Deanery, have moved on in years; three of our priests have passed on to their rest in the Lord. It is not good enough, I think, for each community merely to consider finding successor priests and deacons from among their own ranks for their own church. We begin thinking as an archdiocese, as part of something bigger. We developing already the needed for the structures theological education of future clergy and laypeople. So if our work is to last into the generation of our children when they are grown, every parish and mission will need to consider what it must offer in terms of people and resources.

Fr. Chrysostom

David Bentley Hart is an Orthodox Christian philosopher and scholar. His recent book, The Experience of God, Being, Consciousness, Bliss', has caused quite a storm in the worlds of Theology, Philosophy and Scientific Atheism.

'Searching for God'cont.

Should you venture to read it, I would warn you of two things: it is a philosophical book and mostly requires an academic level of English. Secondly, Bentley Hart is bit of a 'street fighter' when it comes to dealing with his opponents and he does not pull his punches, as they say.

His major arguments in demolishing atheism is that those who attack belief in God from a materialist belief in 'scientism' make the mistake of arguing against a 'god' that Theist do not actually believe in.

Searching for evidence of a god using the scientific method is a complete blind alley. The God of the major religious traditions, he argues, is *Being* itself, personal consciousness and bliss.

Scientism may well analyse what something is and how it came to be in its current state but it fails to wonder that it is in the first place. Mere scientific atheism, he points out, is an enclosed and ultimately illogical system which cannot explain why there is anything at all if there is no absolute being quite separate from the physical objects in existence.

At one point, he uses the analogy of the novel Anna Karenina by Tolstoy. Atheists are like people expecting to find evidence of Tolstoy somewhere among the events and characters of his own novel, whereas the author is not part of his book. You might discover certain attributes of the author expressed in elements of the novel but what is obvious is that the novel has an author, just as Creation has God. Scientific Atheists appear to be saying, by analogy, that Anna Karenina has no need of an author!

In The Temple

As Orthodox Christians we should share what St Paul calls 'the mind of Christ.' This way of seeing in God's way implies that we are, spiritually, already on our way into the kingdom of God and have been since our baptism. This is why we continually repent everything in our life that is unworthy of the kingdom. This applies to everything, small and great and is especially true of when we come to the temple to pray and be part of the Liturgy. When the priest begins, 'Blessed is the kingdom...' we are reminded that though our bodily feet are standing upon earth, our souls are peering to the heart of heaven. How then, should we comport ourselves in church? Here are a few suggestions that we might consider in order to be truer to this understanding and be more in harmony with the mind Christ. We should dress appropriately: though it is not a place show fashionable extravagance, we should. nevertheless, wear our best clothes with modesty. Gentlemen should not wear short trousers or short sleeved shirts: shirts should not be unbuttoned too low at the neck. Their heads should be uncovered. Ladies should not wear short skirts or low cut tops and should cover their arms. It is a pious custom for them to cover the head. Before the service we should be as silent as possible and should avoid idle chatter and talking during the Liturgy. As soon as possible, our children should be taught this and to enter the temple with a sense of awe, humility and wonder. A simple way of inculcating this is to make three metanoias (low bows with the sign of the cross) in the Narthex, before coming in through the door. It is especially important that utter silence and reverence be observed before approaching the

holy chalice.

SERVI*C*ES

Vespers is normally served on Saturday's at 5.00pm in the Saints of Britain chapel. Fr. Chrysostom is available for Confession afterwards. The **Proskomedia** is served at 9.00am and **Orthros** before the Liturgy at 9.30am.

SEPTEMBER

Sun 7th 13th after Pentecost Divine Liturgy 10.30am

Mon 8th Nativity of the Theotokos



Sun 14th Elevation of the Life Giving Cross Divine Liturgy 10.30am (Fast Day with Wine and Oil)

Sun 21st 15th after Pentecost Divine Liturgy 10.30am

Sun 28th 16th after Pentecost Divine Liturgy 10.30am



OCTOBER

Sun 5th 17th after Pentecost Divine Liturgy 10.30am

Sun 12th 18th after Pentecost Divine Liturgy 10.30am

Sun 19th 19th after Pentecost Divine Liturgy 10.30am

Sun 26th 20th after PentecostDivine Liturgy 10.30am