

## The Old Testament in the New Testament Church

by Protopresbyter Michael Pomazansky  
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### *Introduction*

A distance of many centuries separates us from the time when the books of the Old Testament were written, especially the first ones. And it is no longer easy for us to transfer our thoughts back to the state of soul and the conditions of life in which the books were first written, and

which are described in the books themselves. This has given birth to many perplexities which confuse the thought of modern man. Such perplexities arise especially when people wish to find an agreement between contemporary, scientific views and the simplicity of the biblical ideas about the world. General questions also arise as to how many of the Old Testament views correspond to the New Testament outlook. And often people ask: “Why the Old Testament? Are not the teachings and scriptures of the New Testament sufficient?”

Concerning the enemies of Christianity, long ago their polemics against the Christian faith began with attacks on the Old Testament. Contemporary militant atheism considers Old Testament accounts the easiest material to suit its purpose. Those who have passed through a period of religious doubt, and perhaps denial of religion (especially those who have been through the Soviet school system with its anti-religious propaganda), usually say that the first stumbling block for their faith arose in this area.

This brief review of the Old Testament Scriptures cannot answer all the questions which arise in this regard; but will try to indicate some guiding principles, with the help of which many perplexities can be avoided.

#### *In Accordance with the Saviour's and the Apostles' Commandments*

**T**he Early Christian Church constantly dwelt in spirit in the Heavenly City, seeking the things to come, but she also organized the earthly aspect of her existence; in particular, she accumulated and took great care of the material treasures of the Faith. First among these treasures were the written documents concerning the Faith. The most important of the Scriptures were the Gospels, the sacred record of the earthly life and the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Next came all the other writings of the Apostles. After them came the holy books of the Hebrews. The Church also treasures them as sacred writings.

What makes the Old Testament Scriptures valuable to the Church? The fact that a) they teach belief in the one, true God, and the fulfillment of God's commandments and b) they speak about the Saviour. Christ Himself points this out. *Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life and they are they which testify of Me*, He said to the Jewish scribes. In the parable about the Rich Man and Lazarus, the Saviour puts these words about the Rich Man's brothers into the mouth of Abraham: *They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them*. “Moses” means the first five books of the Old Testament; “the prophets” — the last sixteen books. Speaking with His disciples, the Saviour mentioned the Psalter in addition to these books: *... all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning Me. After the Mystical Supper, when they chanted a hymn, they went out into the Mount of Olives*, says the Evangelist Matthew. This refers to the chanting of psalms. The Saviour's words and examples are sufficient to make the Church esteem these books — the Law of Moses, the prophets and the psalms — to make her preserve them and learn from them. In the Hebrew canon, the cycle of books recognized as sacred by the Hebrews, there were and still remain two more categories of books besides the Law and the Prophets: the didactic books,

of which only the Psalter has been mentioned, and the historical books. The Church has accepted them, because the Apostles so ordained. Saint Paul writes to Timothy: *From a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.* This means: if one reads them wisely, then one will find in them the path which leads to strengthening in Christianity. The Apostle had in mind all the books of the Old Testament, as is evident from what he says next: *All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness* (2 Tim. 3:16).

The Church has received the sacred Hebrew books in the Greek translation of the Septuagint, which was made long before the Nativity of Christ. This translation was used by the Apostles, as they wrote their own epistles in Greek. The canon also contained sacred books of Hebraic origin, which however were extant only in Greek. The Orthodox Christian Church includes them in the collection of Old Testament books (in the biblical science of the West they are called the “deuterocanonical” books). From the time of their Council in Jamnia in 90 A.D., the Jews ceased to make use of these books in their religious life.

In accepting the Old Testament sacred scriptures, the Church has shown that she is the heir of the Old Testament Church — not of the national aspect of Judaism, but of the religious content of the Old Testament. In this heritage, some things have an eternal significance and value, but others have ceased to exist and are significant only as recollections of the past and for edification as prototypes, as, for example, the regulations concerning the tabernacle and the sacrifices, and the prescriptions for the Israelites’ daily conduct. Therefore, the Church makes use of her Old Testament heritage quite authoritatively, in accordance with her understanding of the world, which is more complete than and superior to that of ancient Israel.

### *Using the Old Testament*

While in principle fully recognizing the merit of the Old Testament books, the Christian Church has not, in practice, had the opportunity to make use of them everywhere, always, and to their full extent. This is clear from the fact that the Old Testament Scriptures occupy four times as many pages in the Bible as the New. Before books were printed, that is to say, during the first 1500 years of the Christian era, copying the books, collecting them, and acquiring them was, in itself, a difficult matter. Only a few families could have had a complete collection of them, and certainly not every Church community did. As a source of instruction in the Faith, as a guide for Christian life in the Church, the New Testament, of course, occupies the first place. It can be said only of the Old Testament Psalter that the Church has constantly used it, and still uses it, in its complete form. From the time of the Apostles until our day, she has used it in her services and as the companion of each Christian, and she will continue to use it until the end of the world. From the other books of the Old Testament, she has been satisfied with select readings, and these not even from all the books. In particular, we know of the Russian Church that although she had already shone forth resplendently in the 11th-12th centuries, before the Tatar invasion (this fullness of her life was expressed in the writing of Church services, in iconography and church

architecture, and reflected in the literary monuments of ancient Russia) she nevertheless did not have a complete collection of the Old Testament books. Only at the end of the 15th century did Archbishop Gennadius of Novgorod manage, with great difficulty, to gather Slavonic translations of the books of the Old Testament. And even this was just for one archdiocese, for one bishop's cathedra! Only the printing press gave the Russian people the first complete Bible, published at the end of the 16th century and known as the Ostrog Bible. In our time, the Bible has become readily available. However, in practice the purely liturgical use of the books of the Old Testament has remained the same as always, as it was originally established by the Church.

*Understandest Thou What Thou Readest?*

According to the account in the Acts of the Apostles, when the Apostle Philip met one of Queen Candace's eunuchs on the road and saw the book of the Prophet Isaiah in his hands, he asked the eunuch, *Understandest thou what thou readest? He replied, How can I except some man should guide me?* (Acts 8:30-31). Philip instructed him in the Christian understanding of what he had been reading, with the result that this reading from the Old Testament was followed immediately, there on the road itself, by the eunuch's baptism. As the Apostle interpreted in the light of the Christian faith what the eunuch had been reading so we also must approach reading the Old Testament from the standpoint of the Christian Faith. It needs to be understood in a New Testament way, in the light which proceeds from the Church. For this purpose the Church offers us the patristic commentaries on the Holy Scriptures, preferring that we should assimilate the contents of the sacred books through them. It is necessary to bear in mind that the Old Testament is the *shadow of good things to come* (Heb. 10:1). If the reader forgets this, he may not receive the edification he should, as the Apostle Paul warns. Concerning the Jews he writes that *even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their hearts: with them it remaineth untaken away in the reading of the Old Testament*, that is to say, they are not spiritually enlightened unto faith. Nevertheless, when they *shall turn to the Lord*, the Apostle concludes his thought, *the veil shall be taken away* (2 Cor. 3:14-16). So we must also read these books from a Christian point of view. This means to read them while remembering the Lord's words: ... *They [the Scriptures] are they which testify of Me*. They require not simply reading, but searching. In them are contained the preparation for the coming of Christ, promises, prophecies, and types or antitypes of Christ. It is according to this principle that the Old Testament readings are chosen for use in the church services. Furthermore, if the Church offers us moral edification in them, she chooses such passages as are written, as it were, in the light of the Gospel, which speak, for example, of the "eternal life" of the righteous ones, of "righteousness according to faith," and of Grace. If we Christians approach the books of the Old Testament in this light, then we find in them an enormous wealth of edification. Even as drops of dew on plants shine with all the colors of the rainbow when the sunlight falls on them, even as twigs of trees that are covered with ice are iridescent with all the tints of color as they reflect the sun, so these scriptures reflect that which was foreordained to appear later: the events, deeds, and teaching of the Gospel. But when the sun has set, those dew drops and the icy covering on the trees will no longer caress our eyes, although they themselves remain the same as they were when the sun was shining. It is the same with the Old Testament Scriptures. Without the sunlight of the Gospel they remain old and

decaying, as the Apostle said of them, as the Church has also called them, and *that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away*, as the Apostle expresses it (Heb. 8:13). The Kingdom of the chosen people of old has come to an end, the Kingdom of Christ has come: *the law and the prophets were until John; from henceforth the Kingdom of God is proclaimed* (Luke 16:16).

#### *Why it is Necessary to Know the Old Testament*

**W**e listen to the hymns and readings in Church, and two series of events are revealed before us: the Old Testament — and the New, as the type and the fulfillment, as the shadow and the truth, as the fall and the rising, as the loss and the gain. In the patristic writings and the hymns in the church services the Old and New Testaments are constantly being contrasted: Adam and Christ, Eve and the Mother of God. There, the earthly paradise; here, the Heavenly paradise. Through the woman came sin; through the Virgin, salvation. The eating of the fruit unto death; the partaking of the Holy Gifts unto life. There, the forbidden tree; here, the saving Cross. There it is said, *Ye shall die the death*; here, *today shalt thou be with Me in paradise*. There, the serpent, the deceiver; here, Gabriel, the preacher of good tidings. There, the woman is told, *In sorrow shalt thou bring forth children*; here, the women at the tomb are told, *Rejoice*. The parallel is made throughout the entirety of the two Testaments. Salvation from the flood in the ark; salvation in the Church. The three strangers with Abraham; the Gospel truth of the Holy Trinity. The offering of Isaac as sacrifice; the Saviour's death on the Cross. The ladder which Jacob saw as in a dream; the Mother of God, the ladder of the Son of God's descent to earth. The sale of Joseph by his brothers; the betrayal of Christ by Judas. Slavery in Egypt; the spiritual slavery of mankind to the devil. The departure from Egypt; salvation in Christ. Crossing the Red Sea; Holy Baptism. The unconsumed bush; the perpetual virginity of the Mother of God. The Sabbath; the day of Resurrection. The ritual of circumcision; the Mystery of Baptism. Manna; the Lord's Supper of the New Testament. The Law of Moses; the Law of the Gospel. Sinai; the Sermon on the Mount. The tabernacle; the New Testament Church. The Ark of the Covenant; the Mother of God. The serpent on the staff; the nailing of Christ to the Cross. Aaron's rod which blossomed; the rebirth in Christ. We could continue with such comparisons even further.

The New Testament understanding, which is expressed in our hymns, makes the meaning of the Old Testament events even more profound. With what power did Moses divide the sea? — with the sign of the Cross. "Inscribing the invincible weapon of the Cross upon the waters, Moses marked a straight line before him with his staff and divided the Red Sea." Who led the Jews through the Red Sea? — Christ. Christ "hath thrown the horse and rider into the Red Sea,... and He hath saved Israel." The return of the sea to its former state after the Israelites had crossed was a prototype of the incorrupt purity of the Mother of God. "In the Red Sea there was once depicted an image of the Unwedded Bride..." (Dogmatic Theotokion, 5th Tone).

During the first and fifth weeks of Great Lent, we gather in church for the compunctionate and penitential canon of Saint Andrew of Crete. From the beginning of the Old Testament to the end, examples of righteousness and examples of transgressions pass before us in a long sequence, and

then give place to New Testament ones; but only if we know the sacred history of the Old are we able to profit fully from the contents of the canon.

This is why a knowledge of Biblical history is necessary not only for adults; by giving our children lessons from the Old Testament we also prepare them to take part intelligently in the services, and understand them. But there are other, still more important reasons.

In the Saviour's preaching, and in the Apostles' writings, there are many references to people, events and texts from the Old Testament: to Moses, Elias, Jonah, to the testimony of the Prophet Isaiah, and so on.

In the Old Testament the *reasons* are given why salvation through the coming of the Son of God was essential for humanity.

Nor must we lose sight of the purely *moral edification* which the Old Testament contains. *The time would fail me*, writes the Apostle Paul, *to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Sampson, and of Jephthae, of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens ... of whom the world was not worthy: they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth ...* (Heb. 11:32-34, 38). We too can profit from this edification. The Church constantly places before our mind's eye the image of the Three Children in the Babylonian furnace.

#### *Under the Church's Guidance*

**I**n the church, everything is in its proper place. In the Church everything has its own tone and correct illumination. This applies as well to the Old Testament Scriptures. We know by heart the Ten Commandments that were given on Sinai, but we understand them far more profoundly than the Jews did, because for us they are illuminated and deepened by the Saviour's Sermon on the Mount. Much moral and ritual legislation passes before us throughout the Mosaic Law, but the words, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind* and *Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself*, which are to be found amid the mass of Moses' other instructions, have *only through the Gospel* begun to shine for us with their full brilliance. Neither the tabernacle, nor Solomon's temple exist any more; yet we study their construction because many symbols of the New Testament are contained in their ordinances. In church we hear readings from the prophets; but they are not offered to us so that we may know the fate of the peoples who surrounded Palestine, but because in these readings prophecies are made of Christ and the events of the Gospel.

But then it happened (in the 16th century, in Western Europe) that an enormous group of "Christians" who refused to be guided by ecclesiastical tradition (in over-reaction, of course, against the Roman distortion of the true Tradition), threw aside all the wealth of the Tradition of the ancient Church, deciding to keep, as the source and guide of faith, only the Holy Scriptures:

the Bible in its two parts: the Old and the New Testaments. This is how Protestantism acted. Let us give it its due: it had become inflamed with thirst for the living word of God, it had come to love the Bible. But it did not learn that the Sacred Scriptures were collected by the Church and belong to the Church in her historical, apostolic succession. It did not take into account that the Church's Faith is illuminated by the Bible, just as, in its turn, the Bible is illuminated by the Church's Faith; one requires the other, each rests on the other. Left with the Holy Scriptures only, these "Christians" frenziedly began studying it, in the hope that, following its path closely, they would see this path so clearly that no longer would there be any cause for disagreements about faith. The Bible, three quarters of which, in terms of its overall volume, consists of the Old Testament, became a constant reference book. They investigated it in its minutest details, compared it with ancient Hebrew texts, counted how many times certain words are used in the Holy Scriptures. However, in doing this they began to lose a sense of proportion; they thought of the Old and New Testaments as two equivalent sources of the same Faith, as mutually supplementing each other, as two completely equal aspects of it. And with certain groups of Protestants, the predominance in quantity of the Old Testament and the fact that it occupies first place in order in the Bible gave rise to the view that the Old Testament also occupies first place in significance. Thus the Judaizing sects made their appearance. They began to place the monotheism (which they considered to be belief in simply one God) of the Old Testament higher than the New Testament monotheism with its divinely revealed truth of the one God in the Holy Trinity; the commandments given on Sinai became more important than the Gospel teaching; the Sabbath more important than Sunday, the day of the Resurrection.

Others, who may not have taken this Judaizing path, are yet unable to distinguish between the spirit of the Old Testament and that of the New, the spirit of slavery and the spirit of sonship, the spirit of the law and the spirit of freedom. Under the influence of certain passages of the Old Testament, they have rejected that fullness of worship which is expressed in the Christian Church in various forms of worship involving both the spirit and the body, they have rejected external methods of expressing it and, in particular, have disdained the symbol of Christianity — the Cross — and other sacred images, thereby bringing themselves under the Apostle's condemnation: *Thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege?* (Rom. 2:22). A third group of people (more humanistically oriented) confused either by the simplicity with which the ancient accounts are told, or by the severe character of antiquity (especially as it manifested itself in war), or by Hebrew ethnicism or by other features of the pre-Christian era, began to take a negative attitude towards these accounts, and then to the Bible itself in its entirety.

Even as it is impossible to eat bread alone without water, even though bread is essential for the organism, so it is impossible to be nourished spiritually by the Scriptures alone, without the refreshment of Grace provided by life in the Church. Protestant theological faculties, which purport to guard Christianity and its sources, and work on the study of the Bible, are, as it were, left with a bitter taste in their mouths. They were carried away with the critical analysis of scriptural texts, initially of the Old Testament, and later, of the New. As they gradually ceased to feel its spiritual power, they began to approach the sacred books like the ordinary documents of

antiquity, using the methods and techniques of nineteenth century positivism. Some of these theologians sought to outdo each other in contriving theories for the origin of various books, contrary to the sacred tradition of antiquity. In order to explain instances of the foreknowledge of future events in the sacred books, they began to say that these books were, in fact, written at a later date, at the time of the actual events. The theories have changed, but the method itself has, for them, dealt a blow to the authority of Holy Scripture and the Christian Faith. It is true that simple Protestant believers ignored this so-called “Biblical criticism,” and to a degree continue to do so. But in so far as the pastors have attended modernist theological schools, they themselves not infrequently have been transmitters of this critical thought in their communities. The period of Biblical criticism is now on the wane, but this upheaval has led a large number of sects to the loss of dogmatic faith; they have begun to recognize only the moral teaching of the Gospel, forgetting that it is inseparable from its dogmatic doctrine.

It often happens that even good undertakings have their dark side.

Thus, the translation of the Bible into all contemporary languages was a great event in the field of Christian culture. We must admit that to a great degree this task has been fulfilled by Protestantism. However, it must also be admitted that it is more difficult to feel the breath of deep and sacred antiquity of the Old Testament Scriptures in our contemporary languages. When reading the Scriptures in these languages, not everyone will take into account the immense distance which separates the two epochs, the apostolic and our own, and hence, there arises an inability to understand and value the simplicity of the Biblical accounts. Not without reason some Jews carefully preserve the ancient Hebrew language of the Scriptures, and even avoid using a printed Bible for prayers and readings in the synagogues, but use manuscript copies of the Old Testament written on parchment.

Propagating the Bible over the face of the earth in editions of many millions was also certainly a great deed. But even here, has not the mass distribution made people take a less reverent attitude towards the Book of books?

What we have just said relates to activities within “Christendom.” But to this were joined other circumstances from without. The Bible found itself face to face with scientific research: with geology, paleontology, archaeology. From beneath the earth appeared the world of the past, hitherto almost unknown. Contemporary science gave antiquity a span which extended back over an enormous number of millennia. The enemies of religion did not hesitate to use scientific data as evidence against the Bible, which they placed on the judgement seat, saying to it in the words of Pilate: *Behold how many things they witness against Thee* (Mark 15:4).

Under these new conditions, we must confirm ourselves in a sure consciousness of the sanctity of the Bible, of its truth, of its value, of its exceptional nature and its grandeur, as the Book of books, the authentic record of mankind. Our task is to protect ourselves from confusion and doubts. It is chiefly the Holy Scriptures of the Old Testament which are contested by contemporary scientific theories. Therefore, let us approach the Old Testament more closely. Let



us look into their very essence. As far as science is concerned, we may be quite sure that objective, unprejudiced, authentic science will always testify in its conclusions to the truth of the Bible. Saint John of Kronstadt advises:

“When you doubt in the truth of any person or any event described in Holy Scripture, then remember that *all Scripture is given by inspiration of God* (2 Tim. 3:16), as the Apostle says, and is therefore true, and does not contain any imaginary persons, fables, and tales, although it includes parables which everyone can see are not actual narratives, but are written in figurative language. The whole of the Word of God is one, entire, indivisible truth; and if you assert that any narrative, sentence or word is untrue, then you sin against the truth of the whole of Holy Scripture and its primordial Truth, which is God Himself.” (*My Life in Christ*, Saint John of Kronstadt, p. 70).

### *The Divine Inspiration of the Scriptures*

We usually qualify “scripture” with the word “sacred”. “Sacred” means “sanctified,” “having Grace in itself,” “reflecting the wafting of the Holy Spirit.” Only to the Gospels is the word “holy” always applied, and, before the reading of the Gospel, we are called upon to pray that we will be worthy to hear it: “And that we may be vouchsafed to hear the Holy Gospel let us ask of the Lord God”; and we are obliged to listen to it standing: “Wisdom; aright; let us hear the Holy Gospel,” while when listening to the Old Testament readings, the parables, the Orthodox Church allows us to sit. Even while the Psalms are being read, not so much as prayers, but rather offered for meditation, for edification, as for example, the kathismas at Matins, we are allowed to sit. Thus in relation to the sacred books we can also say, in the word of the Apostle Paul, that *one star differeth from another star in glory* (1 Cor. 15:41). All of Scripture is divinely inspired, but its very subject matter elevates some books above others; there, the Israelites and the Old Testament law; here (in the New Testament) Christ the Saviour and His divine teaching. What constitutes the divinely inspired nature of Scripture? The sacred authors were invested or guided by that which, in supreme spiritual moments, becomes illumination and God’s direct revelation. Concerning this latter state, they usually say of themselves, “I received revelation from the Lord,” as we read in the prophets and in the Apostles Paul and John in the New Testament. Together with all this, however, the writers use the usual means of acquiring knowledge. Thus, for information about the past, they turn to oral tradition. *Even those things that we have heard and have known and which our fathers have told us; they were not hid from their children, in another generation. They declared the praises of the Lord and His mighty acts and His wonders...* (Ps. 44:1). *O God, with our ears have we heard, for our fathers have told us the work which Thou hadst wrought in their days, in the days of old...* (Ps. 78:2-3). The Apostle Luke, who was not one of the twelve Apostles, describes the Gospel events as one having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first (Luke 1:3).

The sacred authors use written documents, censuses of people, family genealogies; they state

accounts with indications of building expenses, quantities of material, weights, prices, etc. In the historical books of the Old Testament, we find references to other books as sources; for example, in the books of Kings and Chronicles, *And the rest of the acts of Ahaziah which he did, behold, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? And the rest of the words of Joatham, and all that he did, behold, are not these written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?* (2 Samuel 1:18; 15:36; 2 Chron. 12:15; 13:22 and other places). Original documents are also quoted: the first book of Esdras reproduces word for word a whole series of orders and reports connected with the restoration of the Temple at Jerusalem. We must not think that the sacred authors were omniscient. That quality is not given even to the angels; it belongs to God alone. But these writers were holy. *The children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance* (2 Cor. 3:7), recalls Saint Paul. This sanctity of the writers, their purity of mind, and heart, their consciousness of the loftiness of their calling and of their responsibility for fulfilling it, were directly expressed in their writings: in the sanctity, purity and righteousness of their thoughts, in the truth of their words, in the clear distinction of the true from the false. They began their records with inspiration from above and being thus inspired, they completed them.

At certain moments, their spirit was enlightened by special Grace filled revelations from on high and by mystical insight into the past, as with the Prophet Moses in the book of Genesis, or into the future, as with the later prophets and Christ's Apostles. It is natural for us to imagine a vision as in a mist, like seeing behind a curtain for a moment. *Now we see through a glass darkly, but then [in the age to come we shall see] face to face* (1 Cor. 13:12), testifies Saint Paul. Whether the attention is directed towards the past or the future, no account of time is made in this vision; the prophets see "things that are afar off as if they were near." This is why the Evangelists depict two future events, foretold by the Lord, the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the world in such a way that they almost merge into one future perspective. *It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in His own authority* (Acts 1:7), said the Lord. Divine inspiration belongs not only to Holy Scripture. As we know, the Holy Orthodox Church recognizes Holy Tradition as a source of faith equal to Holy Scripture. For Tradition, which expresses the voice of the whole Church, is also the voice of the Holy Spirit living in the Church. All our church services are also divinely inspired, as the Holy Church sings, "Let us worthily honor the witnesses of truth and heralds of piety in divinely inspired hymns" (Kontakion to Sts. Zenobius and Zenobia, Oct. 30); and in particular, the Liturgy of the Holy Mysteries is called by the more elevated name of "Divine Liturgy," since it is divinely inspired.

### *Narrative of the Creation of the World*

Let us open the book of Genesis. The first place in it is occupied by the origin of the world. Moses, the seer of God, speaks briefly about the creation of the world. His account occupies about one page of the Bible. But at the same time he took in everything with a single glance. This brevity displays profound wisdom, for what loquacity could embrace the greatness of God's work? In essence this page is an entire book, which required great spiritual stature on the part of the sacred author and enlightenment from above. It is not without reason that Moses concludes

his account of the creation as if he were concluding a large and long work: *This is the book of the generations of the heavens and the earth, when they were made, in the day in which the Lord God made the heavens and the earth* (Gen. 2:4).

This was a mighty task — to speak of how the world and all that is in the world came to be. A large enterprise in the realm of thought requires a correspondingly large store of means of expression, a technical and philosophical vocabulary. But what did Moses have? At his disposal was an almost primitive language, the entire vocabulary of which numbered only several hundred words. This language had almost none of those abstract concepts which now make it much easier for us to express our thoughts. The thinking of antiquity is almost entirely expressed in images, and all its words denote what the eyes and ears perceive of the visible world. Because of this, Moses uses the words of his time with care, so as not to immerse the idea of God in the crudeness of purely earthly perceptions. He has to say “God made,” “God took,” “God saw,” “God said,” and even — “God walked;” but the first words of Genesis, *In the beginning God made*, and then, *The Spirit of God moved over the water*, already speak clearly of God as a spirit, and consequently of the metaphorical nature of the anthropomorphic expressions we quoted above. In a later book, the Psalter, when the metaphorical nature of such expressions about the Spirit became generally understood, we encounter many more such expressions, and ones which are more vivid. In it we read about God’s face, about the hands, eyes, steps, shoulders of God, of God’s belly. *Take hold of weapon and shield, and arise unto my help* (Ps. 35:2), the psalmist appeals to God. In his homilies on the book of Genesis, commenting on the words, *And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the afternoon*, Saint John Chrysostom says:

“Let us not, beloved, inattentively pass over what is said by Divine Scripture, and let us not stumble over the words, but reflect that such simple words are used because of our infirmity, and everything is accomplished fittingly for our salvation. Indeed, tell me, if we wish to accept the words in their literal meaning, and will not understand what we are told at the very beginning of the present reading. *And they heard, it is said, the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the afternoon*. What are you saying? God walks? Surely we are not ascribing feet to Him? And shall we not understand anything higher by this? No, God does not walk — quite the contrary! How, in fact, can He Who is everywhere and fills all things, Whose throne is heaven and the earth His footstool, really walk in paradise? What foolish man will say this? What then does it mean, *They heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the afternoon*? He wanted to awaken in them such a feeling (of His nearness), that it would cast them into anxiety, which is what actually happened: they felt this, trying to hide themselves from God Who was approaching them. Sin happened — and the crime — and shame fell upon them. The impartial judge, the conscience, rose up, cried out with a loud voice, reproached them, exposed them and, as it were, exhibited before their eyes, the seriousness of the crimes. In the beginning, the Master created man and placed the conscience in him, as an inexorable accuser, which cannot be deceived or flattered ...”

In our era of geological and paleontological research and discoveries, the world of the past is

depicted on an immeasurably vast time scale; the appearance of humanity itself is ascribed to immensely distant millennia. In questions of the origin and development of the world, science follows its own path, but it is not essential for us to make efforts to bring the Biblical account into congruence and harmony in all points with the voice of contemporary science. We have no need to plunge ourselves into geology and paleontology to support the Biblical account. In principle we are convinced that the words of the Bible and scientific data will not prove to be in contradiction, even if at any given time their agreement in one respect or another is still not clear to us. In some cases scientific data can show us how we should understand the facts in the Bible. In some respects these two fields are not comparable; they have different purposes, to the extent that they have contrasting points of view from which they see the world.

Moses' task was not the study of the physical world. However, we agree in recognizing and honoring Moses for giving mankind the first elementary natural history; for being the first person in the world to give the history of early humanity; and, finally, for giving a beginning to the history of nations in the book of Genesis. All this only emphasizes his greatness. He presents the creation of the world and its history, in the small space of a single page of the Bible; hence it is already clear, from this brevity, why he does not draw the thread of the world's history through the deep abyss of the past, but rather presents it simply as one general picture. Moses' immediate aim in the account of the creation was to instill basic religious truths into his people and, through them, into other peoples.

The principal truth is that God is the one spiritual Being independent of the world. This truth was preserved in that branch of humanity which the fifth and sixth chapters of the book of Genesis call the "sons of God," and from them faith in the one God was passed on to Abraham and his descendants. By the time of Moses, the other peoples had already lost this truth for some time. It was even becoming darkened among the Hebrew people, surrounded as they were by polytheistic nations, and threatened to die out during their captivity in Egypt. For Moses himself the greatness of the one, divine Spirit was revealed by the unconsumed, burning bush in the wilderness. He asked in perplexity: *Behold, I shall go forth to the children of Israel, and shall say to them, "The God of our fathers has sent me to you" — and they will ask of me, "What is His name?" What shall I say to them? Then, Moses heard a mystical voice give the name of the very essence of God: And God spoke to Moses, saying, I am the Being. Thus shall ye say to the children of Israel, the Being has sent me to you* (Ex. 3:13-14).

Such is the lofty conception of God that Moses is expounding in the first words of the book of Genesis: *In the beginning God made the heaven and the earth*. Even when nothing material existed, there was the one Spirit, God, Who transcends time, transcends space, Whose existence is not limited to heaven, since heaven was made together with time and the earth. In the first line of the book of Genesis the name of God is given without any definitions or limitations: for the only thing that can be said about God is that He is, that He is the one, true, eternal Being, the Source of all being, He is the Being.

A series of other truths about God, the world, and man, are bound up with this truth and follow

directly from the account of the creation. These are:

- God did not separate a part of Himself, was in no way diminished, nor was He augmented in creating the world.
- God created the world of His free will, and was not compelled by any necessity.
- The world does not, of itself, have a divine nature; it is neither the offspring of the Deity, nor part of Him, nor the body of the Deity.
- The world manifests the wisdom, power, and goodness of God.
- The world which is visible to us was formed gradually, in order, from the lower to the higher and more perfect.
- In the created world “everything was very good”; the world in its entirety is harmonious, excellent, wisely and bountifully ordered.
- Man is an earthly being, made from earth, and appointed to be the crown of earthly creation.
- Man is made after the image and likeness of God, and bears in himself the breath of life from God.

From these truths the logical conclusion follows that man is obliged to strive towards moral purity and excellence, so as not to deface and lose the image of God in himself, that he might be worthy to stand at the head of earthly creation.

Of course, the revelation about the creation of the world supplanted in the minds of the Hebrews all the tales they had heard from the peoples surrounding them. These fables told of imaginary gods and goddesses, who a) are themselves dependent on the existence of the world and are in essence, impotent, b) who are replete with weaknesses, passions and enmity, bringing and spreading evil, and therefore, c) even if they did exist would be incapable of elevating mankind ethically. The history of the creation of the world, which has its own independent value as a divinely revealed truth, deals, as we see, a blow to the pagan, polytheistic, mythological religions.

The Old Testament concept of God is expressed with vivid imagery in the book of the Wisdom of Solomon: *For the whole world before Thee is as a little grain in the balance yea, as a drop of the morning dew that falleth down upon the earth!* (Wis. 11:22). The book of Genesis confesses pure, unadulterated monotheism. Yet Christianity brings out a higher truth in the Old Testament accounts: the truth of the unity of God in a Trinity of Persons. We read: *Let us make man according to our image; Adam is become as one of us*; and later, God appeared to Abraham in the form of three strangers.

Such is the significance of this short account. If the whole book of Genesis consisted only of the first page of the account of the world and mankind, it would still be a great work, a magnificent expression of God’s revelation, of the divine illumination of human thought.

*The Dawn of Humanity*

The second and third chapters of the book of Genesis unfold a new theme; we can say that they begin a new book: the history of mankind. It is understandable why Moses speaks twice about the creation of man. It was necessary for him to speak of man in the first chapter as the crown of creation, in the general picture of the creation of the world. Now, after concluding the first theme: *And the heavens and the earth were finished, and the whole world of them* — it is natural that he should begin the history of humanity by speaking again of the creation of the first man and of how woman was made for him. These are the contents of the second chapter, which also describes their life in Eden, in paradise. The third chapter tells of their fall into sin and their loss of paradise. In these accounts, together with the literal meaning, there is a symbolic meaning and we are not in a position to indicate where precisely events are related in their natural, literal sense, and where they are expressed figuratively, we are not in a position to separate the symbol from the simple fact. We only know that, in one form or another, we are being told of events of the most profound significance.

A symbol is a relative means of expression, which is convenient in that it is pictorial, and therefore makes an impression on the soul. It does not require great verbal means to express a thought. At the same time, it leaves a strong impression of the given concept. A symbol gives one the possibility of penetrating more deeply into the meaning of the thought. Thus, in quoting the Psalmic text, *Thy hands have made me*, Saint John of Kronstadt accompanies it with the remark: “Thy hands are the Son and the Spirit.” The word “hands” in relation to God suggests to him the idea of the Most-holy Trinity (*My Life in Christ*). We read similar words in Saint Irenaeus of Lyons: “The Son and the Holy Spirit are, as it were, the hands of the Father” (*Against Heresies*, bk. 5, ch. 6).

It is essential to make a strict distinction between Biblical symbol and imagery, with the special meaning which is hidden within it, and the concept of myth. In the Bible there is no mythology. Mythology belongs to polytheism, which personifies as gods the phenomena of nature and has created fantastic tales on this basis. We are justified in saying that the book of Genesis is a “de-mythologizing” of ancient notions, the unmasking of mythology, that it was directed against myths.

It might be said that one can also see symbolism in mythology. This is true. But the difference here is that the truth — often deeply mysterious — lies behind Moses’ figurative expressions; but mythological stories present fiction inspired by the phenomena of nature. These are symbols of the truth; the others are symbols of arbitrary fantasy. For an Orthodox Christian this is similar to the difference between an icon and an idol: the icon is the depiction of a real being, whereas an idol is a depiction of a fictitious creation of the mind.

The symbolic element is felt most strongly where there is the greatest need to reveal an essential point. Such, for example, is the account of the creation of the woman from Adam’s rib. Saint John Chrysostom teaches us:

And He took, it says, one of his ribs. Do not understand these words in a human way, but know that crude expressions are used in adaptation to human infirmity. Indeed, if Scripture did not use these words, then how could we come to know the ineffable mysteries? Let us not, then, dwell only on the words, but let us take everything in an appropriate way, as relating to God. This expression ‘took’ and all similar expressions are used on account of our infirmity (loc. cit., pp. 120-1).

The moral conclusion of this story is comprehensible to us. Saint Paul points it out: woman is called to be in submission to man. *The head of the woman is the man; the head of every man is Christ ... ; for the man is not of the woman, but the woman of the man* (1 Cor. 11:3,8). But why did Moses speak specifically of the manner in which woman was created? He undoubtedly had the intention of protecting the minds of the Hebrews from the fictions of mythology and, in particular, from the mythology of ancient Mesopotamia, the homeland of their ancestors. These sordid and morally corrupting tales tell of how the world of gods, the world of man and the world of animals are in some way merged together: goddesses and gods form unions with men and animals. We find a hint of this in the depictions of lions and bulls with human heads, which are so widespread in Chaldeo-Mesopotamian and Egyptian art.’ The Biblical account of the creation of woman supports the concept that the human race has its own, absolutely unique, independent origin and keeps its physical nature pure and distinct from the beings of the supernatural world, and from the lower realm of animals. That this is so is evident from the preceding verses of the account: *And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; let us make for him a help suitable for him* (Gen. 2:18). And He brought all the wild beasts to Adam, and Adam gave them names, *but for Adam there was not found a helpmate like to himself* (Gen. 2:20). Then it was that God put a trance upon Adam and made him a wife out of one of his ribs.

Thus, after the truth of the unity of God, the truth of the unity, independence, and distinctness of the human race is confirmed. It is with these two basic truths that Saint Paul begins his sermon on the Areopagus in Athens: *God is one, and He hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth* (Acts 17:26). The account of the creation of man and of the origin of the human race which is given in the book of Genesis deals just such a blow to polytheistic, mythological concepts, as did the story of the creation of the world.

The first people lived in paradise, in Eden, that most beautiful garden. The dawn of humanity is illumined by rays of the Sun of Grace in Moses’ account. Now, under the influence of some cave discoveries, early man is usually depicted for us in the gloom of a cave, so as to make a repugnant impression with his animal-like shape, with a protruding lower jaw, with a threatening or frightened expression in his eyes, with a cudgel in his hand, hunting for raw meat. However, the Bible tells us that, although man was in a childlike state in the spiritual sense, he was still a noble creature of God from the beginning of his existence; that from the beginning, his countenance was not dark, not gloomy, but radiant and pure. He was always intellectually superior to other creatures. The gift of speech gave him the opportunity to develop his spiritual nature further. The riches of the vegetable kingdom presented him with an abundance of food.

Life in this most beneficent climate did not require much labor. Moral purity gave him inner peace. The process of development could have taken on a higher form, one which is unknown to us.

In the animal world, although it stands lower than man, we observe many noble-featured, harmoniously built species in the kingdoms of fourlegged animals and birds which express beauty and grace in their external features. We observe so many gentle animals, prepared to show attachment and trust and, what is more important, to serve in almost a disinterested way. There is also much harmony and beauty before us in the plant world and, one could say, the plants compete to be of service with their fruits. Why then is it necessary to conceive of early man alone as deprived of all the attractive and beautiful features with which the animal and plant kingdoms are endowed?

### *The Fall into Sin*

**M**an's blessedness and his nearness to God are inseparable, "*God is my protection and defense: whom shall I fear?*" (cf. Pss. 27:1, 32:7). God "walked in paradise," so close was He to Adam and Eve. But in order to sense the beatitude of God's nearness and to be aware that one is under God's protection, it is necessary to have a dear conscience. When we lose it, we lose this awareness. The first people sinned and then they straightway hid from God. *Adam, where art thou? — I heard Thy voice, as Thou walkedst in the garden, and I feared, because I am naked, and hid myself.*

The Word of God tells us that God is omnipresent, and He is always near. The awareness of this nearness is dimmed only because of man's corruption. However, it does not become extinguished completely. Throughout all the ages, it has lived and continues to live in holy people. It is said of Moses that God spoke with him face to face, as a man would speak with his friend (cf. Deut. 34:10). *Near art Thou, O Lord*, we read in the psalms (Pss. 119:151; 145:12). "My soul lives in God as a fish lives in water or a bird in the air, immersed in Him on all sides and at all times; living in Him, moving in Him, at rest in Him, finding in Him breathing room," writes Saint John of Kronstadt. In another place he reasons: "What is the meaning of the appearance of the three strangers to Abraham? It means that the Lord, in three Persons, continually, as it were, travels over the earth, and watches over everything that is done on it; and that He Himself comes to those of His servants who are watchful and attentive to themselves and their salvation, and who seek Him, sojourning with them and conversing with them as with His friends (*We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him — John 14:23*); while He sends fire upon the ungodly" (*My Life in Christ*).

This closeness was lost, and so was blessedness. Blessedness was lost and suffering appeared. Moses' account of the fall into sin is essentially the same as the Lord's parable about the Prodigal Son. He left the father, hid himself from him, that he might be satiated with the sweetness of a free life. But instead of pleasure, he was rewarded with husks, which were used to feed animals, and these not to satiety. It was the same with our forefathers; their fall was followed by grief and



sufferings. *I will greatly multiply thy pains and thy groanings; in pain thou shalt bring forth children... In pain..., in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat thy bread, until thou return to the earth, out of which thou wast taken...*

Eating the forbidden fruit, it would seem, was such a minor offense. Could it really have such consequences or bring such a punishment? But everything in life has its beginning; great things arise from insignificant, small ones. An avalanche in the mountains begins from a slight tremor. The Volga originates from a little spring, and the broad Hudson from the “tear clouds” which are lost in the mountains.

Simple observation tells us that there is a connection between vices and suffering, that they lead to suffering and that man thus punishes himself. If death and many of the hardships of life constitute a chastisement from God, still it must be recognized that the majority of man’s sufferings are created by humanity itself. This applies to savage wars, accompanied with the terribly inhuman treatment of the vanquished. Wars, in fact, constitute the entire history of humanity. It also applies to those types of suffering inflicted by man on man, which have accompanied the peaceful periods of history: slavery, the yokes of foreign invaders, and the various kinds of violence, which are caused not only by greed and egoism, but also by a kind of demonic passion for cruelty and brutality. In a word, all this is expressed in the old proverb: man’s worst enemy is man.

Would man have enjoyed complete blessedness on earth if the fall had not occurred? Would he be free from worries, annoyances, sadness, accidents? Apparently the Bible does not speak of such tranquility in life. Where there is light, there is also shadow; where there is joy, there must also be sorrow. But what sorrows can last long, if the Lord is near?... if He commands His angels to protect His supreme creatures, those who bear His image and likeness in themselves? The Church teaches that man in paradise was created for immortality, not only that of the soul, but also of the body. Yet even if he were not eternal in his earthly body, what woe could there be if he perceived his immortality with all the powers of his soul? If he knew and felt that a transformation into a yet higher form of life awaits him?

### *The Problem of Evil*

**N**ow we have touched upon one of the very broadest questions, that of the general problem of suffering in the world which is so very difficult for religious philosophy to explain. Why is the law of the constant renovation of life, the beneficent law of the life of the world, conjoined with suffering? Is it inevitable that creatures should mutually destroy each other? That some should be eaten by others to support their own life? That the weak should be in fear of the strong, and brute force should triumph in the animal kingdom? Is the struggle of one creature with another an eternal condition of life?

The Bible does not give a direct answer to our questions. However, we do find indirect indications of a solution. Here is what is said about the first law of nourishment which God gave

His creatures. God appoints the seeds of plants and the fruit of trees as food for man. Only after the flood does he also make meat lawful for him. For animals, God declares: *And to all the wild beasts of the earth, and to all the fowls of heaven, and to every reptile creeping on the earth, which has in itself the breath of life, [I have given] every green plant for food, and it was so* (Gen. 1:30).

But the fall occurred. Before the flood, the human race had become corrupt. This corruption also touched the world of earthly creatures: *And the Lord God saw the earth, and it was corrupted; because all flesh had corrupted His way upon the earth* (Gen. 6:12). The law of concord gave way to the law of struggle. And Saint Paul writes: For the earnest expectation of creation awaiteth the manifestation of the sons of God. *For creation was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him Who hath subjected the same in hope, because creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious freedom of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not they only, but ourselves also, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body* (Rom. 8:19-23). This means that the groaning of creation is not eternal; obviously then, neither is the law of conflict, the right of the strongest. And is it, indeed, indisputably a law of life? Do we not observe that the ferocious, bloodthirsty, and formidably strong representatives of the animal world disappear more quickly from the face of the earth than the apparently defenseless, gentle creatures, which continue to live and multiply? Is this not an oblique indication to humanity itself not to rely on the principles of force? The holy Prophet Isaiah speaks of the temporary nature of the principle, when he prophesies about the time (of course not in this sinful world) when *the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down together with the kid* (Is. 11:6). The account of the origin of evil in the world, of moral evil, and physical and spiritual sufferings, is given in the third chapter of the book of Genesis, and constitutes a new, third blow against pagan mythology. According to the mythological tales, the gods experienced passions and vices and the sufferings which resulted; conflicts, treachery and murders take place among them. Then there are religions which postulate that there is a god of good and a god of evil; but one way or the other, evil is thus primordial. Hence, suffering is a normal condition of life, and there is no path to genuine moral perfection. This is not what the Bible tells us. *God did not create or cause evil.* What was created was “very good” by nature. Sin came into the world through temptation; that is why it is called “sin,” i.e., a missing of the mark, losing of the way, a deviation of the will to the wrong side. After sin came suffering.

The author of the Wisdom of Solomon says: *For God made not death: neither hath He pleasure in the destruction of the living. For He created all things that they might have their being; and the generations of the world were healthful, and there is no poison of destruction in them, nor the kingdom of Hades upon the earth... For God created man for incorruption, and made him to be the image of His own eternity. But through the envy of the devil, came death into the world; and they that are of His portion experience it* (Wis. 1:13-14; 2:23-24).

But the moral law is not destroyed by man’s fall. It continues to shine, the distinction between

good and evil is not lost. Man retains the possibility of returning to his lost riches. The path to it lies through that grief which leads to moral purification and rebirth, through the sorrow of repentance, which is depicted at the end of the third chapter of Genesis, in the account of the expulsion from Paradise. From the last verses of the third chapter of Genesis, we begin to see the radiant horizon of the New Testament far in the distance, the dawn of the salvation of the human race from moral evil and, at the same time, from suffering and death, through the appearance of the Redeemer of the world.

Thus, the story of the fall into sin is of exceptional importance for understanding the entire history of humanity, and is directly connected with the New Testament. A direct parallel arises between the two events: Adam's fall into sin and the coming of the Son of God on earth. This is always present in Christian thought, in general and particular terms. Christ is called the Second Adam; the tree of the Cross is contrasted with the tree of the fall. Christ's very temptations from the devil in the desert recall, to a certain extent, the temptations of the serpent: there it was "taste of the fruit" and "ye shall be as gods;" here, *If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread*. The Church Fathers prefer a direct, literal understanding of the story of the fall into sin. However, even here the real element, the element of the direct meaning, is so closely intertwined with the hidden, spiritual sense, that there is no possibility of separating them. Such, for example, are the mystical names "tree of life" and "tree of the knowledge of good and evil." The Church, rejoicing in her salvation in Christ, turns her gaze towards the same "Paradise of old," and she sees the Cherubim, who were placed at the gates of Paradise when Adam was expelled, now no longer guarding the tree of life, and the flaming sword no longer hindering our entry into Paradise. After repenting on the cross, the thief hears the words of the Crucified Christ: *Today thou shalt be with Me in Paradise*.

### *Biblical History and Archaeology*

**T**he book of Genesis speaks extremely briefly about the initial period of the life of humanity. After the story of Cain and Abel, the period before the flood is limited almost to a genealogy, to names alone. Calculating the number of years the antediluvian patriarchs lived, we count a span of approximately 1600 years.

Thus, the history of many centuries occupies only a single chapter — the fourth of Genesis. Hence we see how Moses protects his account from arbitrary, popular, or mythological tales. As a source for his genealogies, Moses undoubtedly had very ancient and, of course, very brief lists, whose place of origin was Mesopotamia. From the beginning of its existence, mankind preserved its history as the apple of its eye. Families preserved the memory of their ancestors. But the whole history could express itself only in one thing, in the recording of names and length of life. In contemporary excavations in Mesopotamia, cuneiform fragments are being discovered which go back to the third millennium before Jesus Christ, which means several hundred years before Abraham. In addition to these records, antiquity tried to preserve from generation to generation the memory of its greatest ancestors, the heads of families, and built tombs and similar monuments in their memory. After a detailed account of the flood, the book of Genesis again

returns to its genealogical history, again embracing almost two thousand years, and again it is just as laconic. It just as strictly follows data from sources — unknown to us — in enumerating the heads of generations until Abraham. These records are interrupted by two accounts: that of the flood and Noah and his sons, and that of the building of the tower of Babel and the dispersion of the nations.

If Moses paused to give details of the event of the flood, then obviously he had grounds for it. The principal basis was a direct tradition about the flood among the Hebrew people of that time. They took the account into Egypt and preserved it amongst themselves, while in the monuments of the ancient Egyptians it has not been preserved; evidently they had lost it. Then it comes to light with a mythological coloring in Mesopotamian (Sumerian, not Hebrew) written monuments (from the library of Assurbanipal). This concord about the basic fact clearly demonstrates that the memory of this event was still alive in Mesopotamia. Taking into account the spirit of the language of antiquity, we can assert that Moses uses the expressions in the text of the Bible “all the earth,” “all types of animals,” in the sense in which they were customarily then understood, at the time when the concept of “the world” was limited to the region in which one lived, when that which was before one’s eyes was taken to be everything. We can, therefore, take the words “all,” “everyone” in a relative sense. Even in the time of the Roman Empire and early Christianity, the word “universe” referred to that part of the earth’s surface which had been explored and was known to the ancients. However, this is only one of many possible explanations regarding the question of the flood.

Moses’ account of the flood is subject to three basic tenets, which, in general, are expounded throughout the whole Bible: a) that the world is subject to God’s will, b) that national disasters are a chastisement for man’s impiety, and c) that one tribe (and subsequently — nation) was chosen to preserve the true faith.

The account of the original unity of language, of the building of the tower of Babel and the dispersal of peoples is another detail amid the short scheme of genealogies. The existence of the tower of Babel is confirmed by contemporary archaeology!

When it reaches the time of Abraham, the book of Genesis begins a continuous historical account. From this point, the history of the Hebrew people begins. It continues to the end of Genesis, then into the other four books of the Pentateuch, and then into the cycle of the historical books of the Old Testament, and in part, into the books of the prophets. It then proceeds without interruption, until, at the end, it draws near New Testament times.

Archaeology provides rich material parallel to the biblical history which begins in Abraham’s time. A few decades ago, liberal biblical criticism formulated a theory that the book of Genesis constitutes a collection of pious legends. Now however, archaeological science takes Genesis under serious consideration as one discovery after another confirms the biblical accounts. They prove the great antiquity of names and customs referred to by Moses, like the names of Abraham himself (Abram-ram) and Jacob (Iakov-EI), which are encountered as personal names in ancient

Mesopotamia. There is a connection between the names of Abraham's ancestors and relatives and the names of towns, since towns were named after their founders. These names, in turn, passed from the towns to the people who came from them. Thus, in the names of towns, the following names have been found: Tharrha (Abraham's father), Seruch (Tharrha's uncle), Phaleg (one of their ancestors), Nachor, Arrhan (Abraham's brothers — Charrhan was the region of Mesopotamia from which they came). In observing the morals and customs of that time, the so-called "tables of Nasa," which were found in Mesopotamia, throw some light on such facts as Abraham's intention to adopt his "home-born servant" Eliezer before Isaac was born, Esau's sale of his birthright, the Patriarch's blessings before death, and the story of the Teraphim (the idols which Rachel brought from the house of her father Laban) (Wright, op. cit., p. 41-3). Of course, later periods give more archaeological material. If there are difficulties in making some details agree, this is natural. The title of one book in German on this subject, *In Spite of All, the Bible Is Still True*, expresses our general conclusion, as does the remark of one of the American biblical archaeologists: "There is no doubt now that archaeology confirms the essentially historical nature of the Old Testament tradition" (Albright, p. 176).

The historical books of the Old Testament, like the Pentateuch of Moses, propound the concept of the causal relationship between the people's piety and the people's prosperity. In other words, they show that national disasters are always brought on by apostasy from the faith and moral decline. Therefore, the sacred history of the Old Testament remains very instructive for everyone, even in the Christian era. In her services, the Church indicates many events from this history as examples for us. In the series of historical books, there are some in which the national Hebraic element places the purely religious element in the background, such as the books of Esther and Judith. The Church does not use these books in the services, although, of course, they still remain edifying for us. Thus, the historical material of the Old Testament is no longer important of itself for us, for *old things are passed away* (2 Cor. 5:17), but its importance lies in its edifying content.

In their historical accounts, the prophet Moses and the sacred writers who follow after him speak of many manifestations of God's power, of miraculous phenomena. But rarely do they make use of the term "miracle" or "wonder" (although in the Psalter we encounter it frequently). They instill in us the idea that the whole of history takes place before God's eyes, and that everything consists of events which only seem to be divided into usual and unusual events, into the natural and the miraculous. For the believing soul, openly miraculous events are only an opening in the veil, behind which the interrupted miracle of God's Providence continues and the writ of each man's course is recorded without omission.

### *Old Testament Wisdom*

The didactic books constitute the third group of writings in the Old Testament. They teach man to organize his personal, earthly life in such a way that it will be blessed by God and by men, and may give him prosperity and peace of soul. The wisdom which proceeds from God imparts such

a life.

When Solomon, beginning his reign, offered up his prayers and burnt sacrifices, God appeared to him at night and said: “*Ask, what am I to give thee*” (cf. 1 Kings 3:5). And Solomon asked God only for wisdom and knowledge, in order that he might rule the people of God. And God said to Solomon, “*Because thou hast not asked for riches, property, glory, victories, or long life, but hast asked for wisdom and knowledge, wisdom and knowledge shall be given thee; and I shall also give thee such riches, possessions and glory as former kings have never had, nor will have after thee*” (cf. 1 Kings 3:11-13).

The didactic books are full of practical advice about how to establish one’s life and the life of one’s family intelligently, wisely, in the fear of God, in righteousness, honesty, labor and abstinence, and how to be a useful participant in society. These precepts are extremely instructive, apt, and true. In their expression there is much imagery, liveliness, and wit; although, of course, one encounters statements which accord with the requirements of distant times, and with customs which are foreign to us. Practical guidance for everyday life constitutes the characteristic feature of the Old Testament teaching on wisdom.

However, it would be a mistake to think that Biblical wisdom is the wisdom of earthly prosperity. The Bible sees true wisdom in humble devotion to God in the most severe sufferings and in recognizing the unfathomable nature of God’s ways when suffering innocently. *I myself came forth naked from my mother’s womb, naked also shall I depart hence; the Lord hath given, the Lord hath taken away. As it seemed good to the Lord, so hath it come to pass: blessed be the name of the Lord... If we have received good things from the hand of the Lord, shall we not endure evil things?* (Job 1:21; 2:10). This is the wisdom of the righteous Job. But there is no true wisdom in the dialectical logic of his friends, for the very reason that they self-confidently consider that they understand God’s thoughts. In their arguments there is what could be called rationalism based on a religious foundation. They are told to ask forgiveness of God through Job. However attractive prosperity, wealth, success, or glory may be, it is senseless to become attached to anything of this sort; such is the conclusion of Solomon’s wisdom. Death awaits everyone, and then it will appear that everything was only an outward show, only vanity, “*vanity of vanities, all is vanity!*” (Eccles. 1:2).

There is in life something higher, more valuable, more worthy of praise, which comes from wisdom. This is the striving to know the works of God, to study nature, and finally, the striving for pure knowledge: *To know the composition of the world, and the operation of the elements; the beginning, end and midst of the times, the alterations of the turning of the sun, and changes of the seasons; the cycles of the years and the positions of stars; the natures of living creatures, and the tempers of wild beasts, the violence of winds and the reasonings of men; the diversities of plants, and the virtues of roots... And should a man desire much experience, she (wisdom) knoweth things of old, and doth portray what is to come; she knoweth the subtleties of speeches and can expound dark sentences; she foreknoweth signs and wonders, and the issue of seasons and times... And if one love righteousness, her labors are virtues; for she teacheth temperance*

*and prudence, justice and fortitude, which are such things as men can have nothing more profitable in their life* (Wis. 7:17-20; 8:8; 8:7). Here is a recognition of the degrees of knowledge in its many branches.

Possessing such wisdom is not due to personal merit; it is a gift of God. *I prayed, testifies the author of the Wisdom of Solomon, and the spirit of wisdom came to me... And all such things as are either secret or manifest, them I know. For wisdom, which is the fashioner of all things, taught me, for she is a noetic spirit, holy, only-begotten, manifold, subtle, agile, clear, undefiled, harmless, loving of the good, penetrating, irresistible, beneficent, kind to man, steadfast, sure, free from care, almighty, overseeing all things, and spreading abroad through all noetic, pure, and most subtle spirits... For she is the effulgence of the everlasting light, the unspotted mirror of the energy of God, and the image of his goodness. And though being but one, she can do all things; and remaining in herself, she maketh all things new, and in every generation, entering into holy souls, she maketh them friends of God, and prophets. For God loveth none save him that dwelleth with wisdom*(Wis. 7:22-23; 26-28).

It is not surprising that such a perfect image of Wisdom, as is given in the didactic books of the Old Testament, demands the attention of the Christian, especially in those passages where she is represented as *sitting beside God Himself. The Lord made me the beginning of His ways for His works, we read in Proverbs. He established me before time; in the beginning, before He made the earth, even before He made the depths, before the fountains of the waters came forth, before the mountains were established, and before all hills, He begat me. The Lord made lands and uninhabited tracts and the uttermost inhabited parts under heaven. When He prepared heaven, I was present with Him; and when He prepared His throne upon the winds, and when He made the clouds above mighty, and when He secured the fountains of the earth, and when He strengthened the foundations of the earth, I was by Him, arranging all things; I was that wherein He took delight, and daily I rejoiced in His presence continually. For He rejoiced when He had completed the world, and rejoiced in the children of men... For my outgoings are the outgoings of life, and in them is prepared favor from the Lord* (Prov. 8:27-31; 35).

Here Wisdom is personified as if it were a divine being; there are other similar expressions in the passages about Wisdom. Under the influence of this image, in the Christian religious philosophy of antiquity, the Middle Ages, and of more recent times, there has arisen an attempt to introduce into theological thought the idea that Wisdom here refers to a special divine, personal force, or hypostasis, created, or uncreated, perhaps the soul of the world, the “Divine Sophia.” Within Russian religious thought, the doctrine of Sophia has been accepted and developed by Vladimir S. Soloviev, Fr. Paul Florensky, and Archpriest Sergei Bulgakov. It must, however, be realized that these thinkers develop their thoughts basing them on their own philosophical presuppositions. Wishing to justify them [presuppositions] by Scripture, they do not pay sufficient attention to the fact that personifying abstract concepts was a customary device in Old Testament writing. The writer of the book of Proverbs warns that, while reading the book, it will be necessary *to understand a parable, and a dark speech, the saying of the wise also, and riddles* (Prov. 1:5-6); i.e., do not take figurative expressions literally.

In those passages where Wisdom is depicted in an especially vivid way, as a personal being, as the hypostatic Wisdom, the New Testament accepts this as a reference to the Son of God, Jesus Christ, *the power of God and the wisdom of God*, as we read in Saint Paul (1 Cor. 1:24). Such an interpretation is given, for example, to the passage from Proverbs which is often read in church during Vespers, and which begins, *Wisdom has built a house for herself, and setup seven pillars...* (Prov. 9:1-6). Thus, the sacred author is transferring our thoughts directly into the New Testament, to the preaching of the Gospel, to the mystery of the Eucharist and the organization of the Church of Christ; here the Old Testament is already on the threshold of the New.

### *Old Testament Prayer and Chant*

Among the didactic books, there is one special book, a book of prayer. What Christian — not only Orthodox, but of any confession or sect — does not know the Psalter, or at least the penitential Fiftieth Psalm? Here is a book for all, for prayer in all its forms, for all occasions: in grief, in times of hopelessness and desperation, when one is afraid, surrounded by enemies, surrounded by unbelief and crime; in personal woes and communal disasters; for tears of repentance after a fall, and in the joy after receiving consolation; when feeling reverent exultation, the need to give thanks, to bear witness to one's faith, to strengthen one's hope and to send up pure praise to God when contemplating the greatness and beauty of His creation. In the Psalter, there are many thoughts addressed to one's own soul, much advice, and many words of consolation. Therefore, the exceptionally extensive use of the Psalter in the Church of Christ is not surprising. Not a single divine service could be conducted without psalms. Some of the psalms are read several times during the course of one day's cycle of divine services. And besides this, the entire Psalter is read through in church in the form of the *kathismata* not less than once a week. Finally, all Orthodox services are also interspersed with individual verses from the psalms, in the form of prokeimena, alleluia verses, verses for "God is the Lord," refrains to stichera, and other short prayers of petition, repentance and praise. Christian prayers recorded in the New Testament very often borrow expressions from the psalms.

The Psalter is Christianized in the full sense of the word. This means that the Church puts a Christian meaning into all its expressions, and the Old Testament element retreats into the background. The words "rise up" and "arise, O Lord," direct our thoughts to the Resurrection of Christ; words about captivity are understood in the sense of captivity to sin; the naming of peoples hostile to Israel as spiritual enemies; the name of Israel as the people of the Church; the appeal to slaughter our enemies as an appeal to struggle with passions; the salvation from Egypt and Babylon as salvation in Christ from idolatry. In almost every verse of the Psalter the Church finds a reflection of the New Testament, of some event, or thought, feeling, or confession of faith, hope and love. By citing verses from the psalms in their New Testament sense, the Apostles themselves in their writings, have taught us to approach the Psalter in this way.

Some psalms contain expressions and even groups of verses which are not clear, not only in the Slavonic text, but even in their ancient languages, in the original Hebrew and in the Greek



translation; but next to them are verses which are brilliantly expressive. How many psalms there are which are completely clear and beautifully express our states of soul, and express them in prayer so fully that it is as if the divinely inspired chanter composed them not in some distant age, but in our times and for us!

Finally, there is one book among the didactic which speaks not of wisdom, not of prayer, but of love. This is the “Song of Songs,” about the bride and her beloved. At first impression, this book can appear to be just a beautiful, lyric song. Many liberal commentators, who do not subscribe to the voice of the Fathers of the Church, interpret it in just this way. However, if we read the prophets, we see that, in the Old Testament, the image of the bride and her beloved is used in an elevated sense of the covenant between God and the chosen people. If this book entered the canon of the Israelite’s sacred books, it did so because Old Testament tradition understood it in a lofty, symbolic sense. In the New Testament, without using the poetic form, Saint Paul employs the same symbol when, speaking of the husband’s love for his wife, he compares it with Christ’s love for the Church. In church hymns we often hear the same image of the bride and her betrothed, as a symbol of the burning love of a Christian soul for the Saviour: “Thy lamb, O Jesus, crieth out with a loud voice: I long for Thee, O my Bridegroom, and I endure sufferings as I seek for Thee...” we sing in the dismissal hymn to a woman martyr. A similar expression of the soul’s love for Christ is also encountered in the writings of the Christian ascetics.

#### *Heralds of the New Testament*

**T**he fall of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, and especially the destruction of Jerusalem and the Babylonian captivity, were most terrible blows and upheavals on an unprecedented scale for the Hebrew people. This was God’s judgment for the betrayal of their covenant with Him and for their profound moral corruption. A night of utter darkness and, it seemed, hopelessness had begun for the people. Then there appeared a whole galaxy of persons to console them in their sufferings. Reproof and consolation; these are the two subjects of their proclamations and of their prophetic books, which comprise the last grouping of the books of the Old Testament.

The prophets’ reproofs precede the last blows that sealed the fate of the Hebrew people, when there were still some remnants of prosperity, and the people’s conscience was still slumbering. These reproofs are incomparable in their force, in their unsparing veracity.

*Woe, O sinful nation, a people full of sins, an evil seed, lawless children... Why should ye be smitten any more, transgressing more and more? The whole head is pained, and the whole heart is sad. From the feet to the head there is no soundness in them; a wound, a bruise, a festering ulcer. they have not been cleansed, nor bandaged, nor mollified with ointment... Though ye bring fine flour, it is vain; incense is an abomination to me; I cannot bear your new moons, and your sabbaths, and the festival assemblies... Wash ye, be clean, remove your iniquities from your souls before mine eyes, cease from your iniquities, learn to do good, diligently seek judgment, deliver him that is suffering wrong, plead for the orphan, and obtain justice for the widow. And come, let us reason together, saith the Lord, and though your sins be as purple, I will make them white as*

*snow; and though they be as scarlet, I will make them white as wool, proclaimed the Prophet Isaiah (Is. 1:4-6; 13; 18).*

The Prophet Jeremiah castigates, and he laments the people's fall with even stronger words. *Trust not in yourselves, in lying words, for they shall not Profit you at all, when ye say, The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord... But whereas ye have trusted in lying words, whereby ye shall not be profited; and ye murder, and commit adultery, and steal, and swear falsely, and burn incense to Baal, and are gone after strange gods whom ye know not, so that it is evil with you. Yet have ye come, and stood before Me in the house whereon My name is called, and ye have said, We have refrained from doing all these abominations. Is My house, there whereon My name is called, a den of thieves in your eyes? (Jer. 7:4; 8-11).*

*Who will give water to my head, and a fountain of tears to my eyes? then would I weep for this, my people, day and night, even for the wounded of the daughter of my people. Who would give me a most distant lodge in the wilderness, that I might leave my people and depart from them? for they all commit adultery, an assembly of treacherous men... Every one will mock his friend; they will not speak truth; their tongue hath learned to speak falsehoods; they have committed iniquity and they have not ceased, so as to return... Shall I not visit them for these things, saith the Lord?... And I will remove the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and make it a dwelling place of dragons, and I will utterly lay waste the cities of Judah, so that they shall not be inhabited. Who is the wise man, that he may understand this?... Thus saith the Lord, Be ye prudent and call ye the mourning women, and let them come... and let them take up a lamentation for you, and let your eye pour down tears, and your eyelids drops of water! (Jer. 9:1-18).*

And when the disasters befell them and unheard-of woes were heaped upon them, the Babylonian captivity came and there was no longer any consolation and then those same prophets became the people's only support.

*Comfort ye, comfort ye, My people, saith God. Speak, ye priests, of the heart of Jerusalem; comfort her, for her humiliation is accomplished, her sin is put away; for she hath received at the Lord's hand double the amount of her sins... O thou that bringest glad tidings to Zion, go up on the high mountains; lift up thy voice with strength, thou that bringest glad tidings to Jerusalem. Lift it up, fear not; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God! Behold the Lord. The Lord is coming with strength, and His arm is with power. Behold, His reward is with Him, and the work of each man is before Him. He shall tend His flock as a shepherd, and He shall gather the lambs with His arm and hold them in His bosom, and shall soothe them that are with young (Is. 40:1-2, 9-11).*

Thus the Prophet Isaiah comforts, becoming in those days of lamentation a prophet of God's future deliverance and good will.

*One cries to me out of Seir. Guard ye the bulwarks. I watch in the morning and the night. If you wouldst inquire, inquire and dwell by me. (Is. 21:11-12)*

The night will pass, God's anger will pass. *Be glad, thou thirsty desert; let the wilderness exult, and flower as the lily. And the desert places of Jordan shall blossom and rejoice... Be strong ye hands and palsied knees. Comfort one another, ye faint-hearted, be strong and fear not; behold, our God rendereth judgment, and He will render it; He will come and save us. Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall hear. Then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the stammerers shall speak plainly; for water hath burst forth in the desert, and a channel of water in a thirsty land... But the redeemed and gathered on the Lord's behalf shall walk in it, and shall return, and come to Zion with joy, and everlasting joy shall be over their head; for on their head shall be praise and exultation, and joy shall take possession of them; pain and sorrow, and sighing have fled away* (Is. 35:1-6; 10).

What is it that especially inspires the prophets with bright hopes in these distant visions of the future? Is it the political might of their people, her victories and triumphs which they see before them? Or is it a vision of plenty, riches and abundance in the future which is presented to them? No, it is not these objects of material prosperity or national pride that attract their attention. Could these holy men, who had resigned themselves to a life of suffering, and sometimes even to a martyr's death (the Prophet Isaiah was sawn in two with a wooden saw), really inspire their people with these earthly desires alone? They were contemplating another revelation of God: an unprecedented spiritual rebirth, times of justice and truth, meekness and peace, *when the whole world is filled with the knowledge of the Lord* (Is. 11:9). They proclaimed the coming of the New Testament.

*But this is the covenant that I shall make with the house of Israel; after those days, saith the Lord, Giving, I will give My laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts; and I will be to them a God and they shall be to Me a people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, for I will be merciful to their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more*(Jer. 31: 33-34). Thus prophesies Jeremiah.

The same is proclaimed by Ezekiel. *And I will give you a new heart, and will put a new spirit in you; and I will take away the heart of stone out of your flesh, and will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit in you, and will cause you to walk in Mine ordinances and to keep My judgments, and do them* (Ezek. 36:26-27; and 11:19-20).

The prophets speak much about the requital of the other nations, the enemies of Israel, the pagan peoples, who were only the instruments of God's anger and His chastisement of Israel. They will receive their cup of wrath. But the future blessing of Israel will be a light for them also. *And in that day, there shall be a root of Jesse, and He that shall arise to rule over the nations; in Him shall the nations hope, and His rest shall be a reward,* predicts Isaiah (Is. 11: 10).

The fulfillment of these hopes is linked with the mystical promise of granting Israel an eternal king. *My servant David shall be a prince in the midst of them; for there shall be one shepherd of*

*them all, for they shall walk in Mine ordinances... And David My servant shall be their prince for ever. And I will make with them a covenant of peace, we read in Ezekiel (Ezek. 37:24-26).*

In consoling their contemporaries, the prophets direct the attention of all towards their future King. They present His image before them in these colors: in the light of meekness, gentleness, humility, righteousness. *Jacob is My servant, I will help him: Israel is my chosen, My soul hath accepted him; I have put My Spirit upon him; he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up his voice, nor shall his voice be heard without. A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench; but he shall bring forth judgment to truth (Is. 42:1-3).*

In such and similar words, the prophets depict the coming of the Saviour of the world. Before us, scattered throughout various passages of the prophets' writings, but abundant when taken all together, is a depiction of the future events of the Gospel and its portrayal of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

Here, in Isaiah, is a reference to Galilee, the place where the Saviour first dwelt on earth and appeared to people: *Do this first, do it quickly, O land of Zebulon, land of Naphtali, and the rest inhabiting the seacoast, and the land beyond Jordan, Galilee of the nations. O people walking in darkness, behold a great light. ye that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, a light will shine upon you... For unto us a Child is born, and unto us a Son is given, Whose government is upon His shoulder. And His name is called the angel of great Counsel, Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty One, the Potentate, the Prince of Peace, the Father of the age to come (Is. 9:1-2, 6).*

Here is a reference to the Lord's glorification of Jerusalem: *Shine, shine, O Jerusalem, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. Behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and there shall be thick darkness upon the nations, but the Lord shall appear unto thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee. And kings shall walk in thy light, and nations in the brightness (Is. 60:1-3).*

Here is the prophecy about Christ by this same prophet, which Christ Himself used in the synagogue of Nazareth to begin His earthly preaching: *The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me, He hath sent Me to preach good tidings to the poor, to heal the broken-hearted, to proclaim deliverance to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to declare the acceptable year of the Lord (Is. 61:1-2).*

Does the prophet foresee that the Saviour will not be recognized or accepted by the leaders of the Jewish people, or by those people that follow them? Yes, he makes an oblique reference to this in the great depiction of Christ's sufferings which he gives in Chapter 53 of his book, which is one of the greatest prophecies, if not the greatest of them all:

*O Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? We brought a report of a Child before him; He is as a root in a thirsty land, He hath no form nor*

*comeliness, and we saw Him, but He had no form nor beauty. But His form was ignoble, and forsaken by all men; He was a man of suffering, and acquainted with the bearing of sickness, for His face is turned away from us; He was dishonored and not esteemed. He beareth our sins and is pained for us: yet we accounted Him to be in trouble, and in suffering, and in affliction. But He was wounded on account of our sins, and was bruised because of our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and by His bruises we were healed. All we as sheep have gone astray; every one hath gone astray in his way; and the Lord gave Him up for our sins. And He, because of His affliction openeth not His mouth. He was led as a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before the shearer is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth. In His humiliation, His judgment was taken away, who shall declare His generation? for His life is taken away from the earth, because of the iniquities of My people He was led to death. And I will give the wicked for His burial, and the rich for His death; for He did no iniquity, neither is there guile in His mouth (Is. 53:1-9).*

The Gospel narrative testifies that the Jewish people did not recognize the time of its visitation. However, we cannot say that the prophecies of consolation were not fulfilled. For no one can take away from the Jewish people the boast that from their race came the Most-holy Virgin Mary, that Jesus Christ was of the seed of David, that Christ's Apostles were of the same people, and that Jerusalem has become for all time the place of the glory of the Risen Christ. From Jerusalem, the preaching of the Gospel went forth into the whole world, and of her the Church sings: "Rejoice, holy Zion, thou mother of the churches, and dwelling place of God: for thou wast first to receive remission of sins through the Resurrection" (Octoechos, Tone 8, Sun. Sticheron on "Lord, I have cried").

A full explanation of the fact that it was principally people from the pagan nations who entered the Church of Christ, and that the majority of the Jews remained in unbelief, is given to us in the New Testament by the Apostle Paul. In his writings, we find an exhaustive interpretation of the Old Testament prophecies concerning this. The Apostle writes:

"What if God, willing to show His wrath and to make His power known, endureth with much long suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction, and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had afore prepared unto glory, even us, whom He hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the nations? As He saith also in Hosea, I will call them My people, which were not My people; and her beloved, which was not beloved. And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, ye are not My people, there shall they be called the people of the living God. Isaiah also crieth concerning Israel: Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved... What shall we say then? That the nations which have followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith. But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone; as it is written, Behold, I lay in Zion a stumblingstone and rock of offense, and whosoever believeth in Him shall not be ashamed...

But I say, continues the Apostle in the next chapter, did not Israel know? First Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation will anger you. But Isaiah is very bold, and saith: I was found by them that sought Me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked after Me. But to Israel He saith: All day long I have stretched forth My hands to a disobedient and gainsaying people” (Rom. 9:22-27; 30-33; 10:18-21).

This would seem to be too harsh a fate and too strict a sentence for the chosen people of old. But the Apostle Paul himself becomes a comforter of his people, saying, “For I wish not, brethren, that ye be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye be wise in your own conceits; that hardness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the nations be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved, as it is written: There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and He shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob... For God hath enclosed them all in disobedience, that He might have mercy upon all. O the depths of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!” (Rom. 11:25-26; 32-33).

### *Church’s Heritage*

“**T**he shadow of the law hath passed, and Grace hath come” (Octoechos, Dogmatic Theotokion of the 2nd Tone). The prefiguring paled before the Truth; the shadows that come just before dawn were dispersed when the Sun shone forth. There are no more Old Testament sacrifices; not only in the sense that they have lost their significance, but they no longer exist even physically. There is no tabernacle; there is no Old Testament temple in Jerusalem; the Jews have no high priest or priesthood according to the Law.

The Kingdom of Christ has come. And the very core of the Old Testament law — God’s Ten commandments, which were given on Mount Sinai — yield their place to the commandments which were proclaimed on another mountain, the Beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount. Two ancient commandments remain unshaken: that concerning loving God with all one’s heart, all one’s soul, and all one’s mind, and the second concerning loving one’s neighbor as oneself. They constitute the ideological essence of the Old Testament: the Saviour said that all the Law and the Prophets were based in them. But concerning love for one’s neighbor, the Lord gave us a new, more exalted commandment, during His parting discourse with His disciples: *A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.* Here the previous commandment is not abolished, but is exalted by the concept of love to the level of self-denial, of love which is greater than the love one has for oneself.

At the Mystical Supper, the Lord revealed the mystical truth of the establishment of the New Testament: *This cup is the New Testament in My blood.* This truth became the subject of the Apostles’ preaching.

Nevertheless, the Old Testament remains the foundation on which the Church of Christ stands and rises up to the heavens. The cornerstones of this foundation are the books of the Old

Testament Bible: the nomothetic, historical, didactic and prophetic books. They contain great prophecies about Christ and an almost unlimited number of foreshadowings and reflections of the coming New Testament. In them, we hear early calls to repentance, meekness, and mercy, which were later proclaimed in all their force and depth in the preaching of the Gospel. In them, we find numerous examples of piety and an abundance of moral edification. Eternal truths about God, the world, man, sin, about the necessity of redemption and about the coming of the awaited Redeemer are here revealed to mankind.

Illuminated by the light of the Gospel, and with its full meaning revealed by the New Testament Church, the Old Testament Bible remains an inseparable part of the heritage of Christianity.

- See more at: <http://nftu.net/the-old-testament-in-the-new-testament-church-by-protopresbyter-michael-pomazansky-november-7-1888-november-4-1988/#sthash.YzkZcFjX.dpuf>