

FULFILLMENT



Critical Questions and Answers about Faith and Christianity Today



- ◇ *6 amazing and little known facts about the Bible*
- ◇ *Redwoods, Streams and the history of the Ancient Faith*
- ◇ *Sacred places that will expand your mind and knowledge*



"A stream
is always most pure
as one
returns closer to the source..."

A close-up photograph of a rocky stream bed. The rocks are dark, wet, and covered in patches of green moss. A small stream of water flows over the rocks, creating a soft, white foam. The background is dark and out of focus, showing more rocks and some green foliage.

“Prometheus” - A poem by
George Gordon, Lord Byron (1788-1824)

A mighty lesson we inherit:
Thou art a symbol and a sign
To Mortals of their fate and force;
Like thee, Man is in part divine,
A troubled stream from a pure source;
And Man in portions can foresee
His own funereal destiny;
His wretchedness, and his resistance,
And his sad unallied existence:
To which his Spirit may oppose
Itself--and equal to all woes,
And a firm will, and a deep sense,
Which even in torture can descry
Its own concenter'd recompense,
Triumphant where it dares defy,
And making Death a Victory.

The Message...

Finding Meaning in a confused World...

"In the beginning was The Message" [John 1:1]. What message? We can start with the whole universe. From the vast galaxies to a new-born child, and the beauty of the morning sky... The Message seems obvious, and yet... how easy it is to misunderstand or even suppress it.

What does it all mean? Does life mean anything at all? How can our spiritual eyes be truly opened?

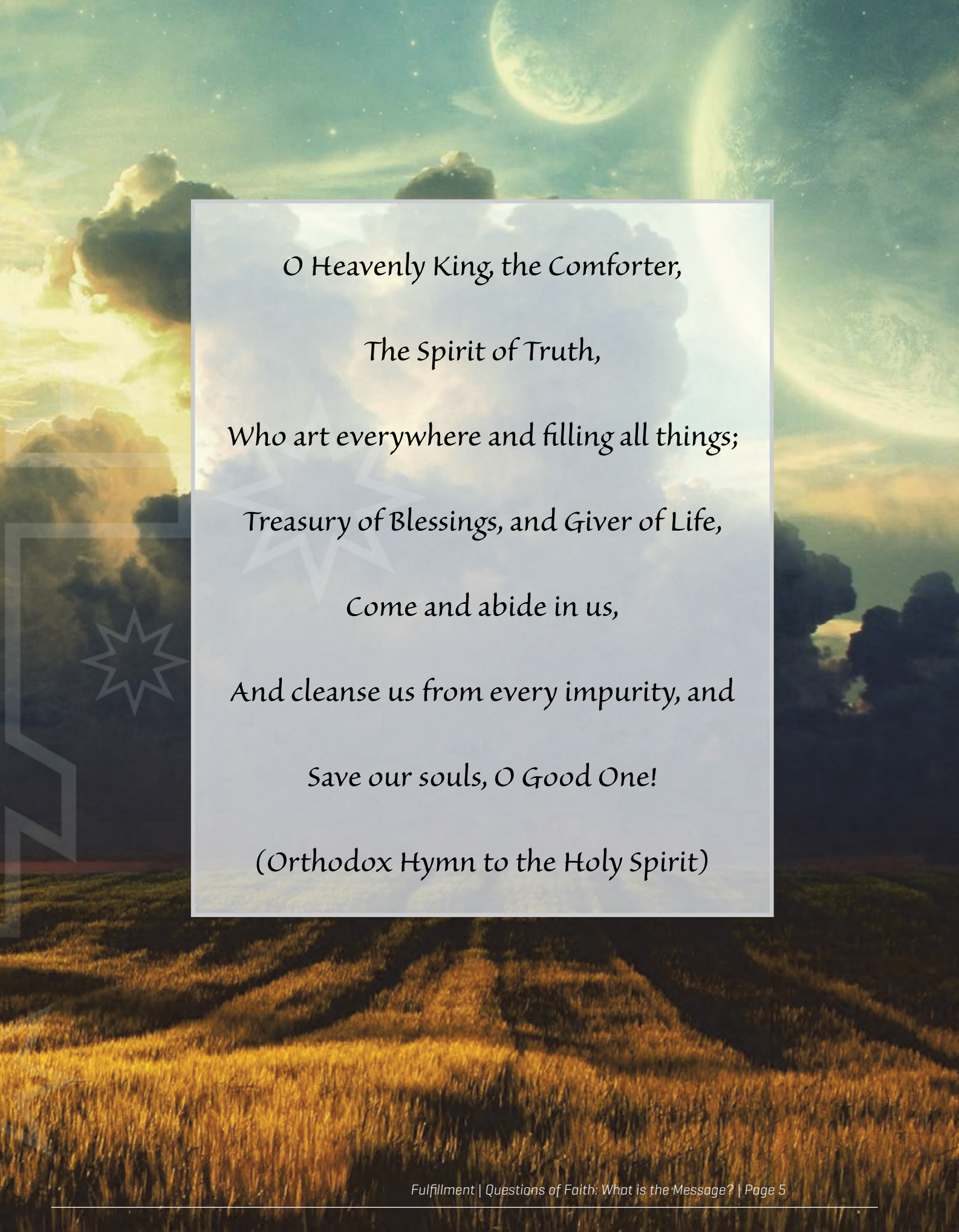
Spiritual is an important word here. "Religion" is increasingly perceived as a negative word, but "Spirituality" is accepted as a universal reality, that of the quest for the true Meaning of Life.

From the Eastern lands where Christianity was born, the illumined sages of the ancient Church taught that *it is only in the Spirit – the Holy Spirit – that human beings can finally perceive the meaning of spiritual realities*. The Spirit is the revealer of the meaning of the Message, and this it is in the *ecclesia* a process of restoration and healing.

And what is the heart of the Message, the great Sign that calls for us to recognize its ultimate significance?

The heart of the Message is the coming into the world as a human being of the eternal Word/Message of God. Only He in history has a lasting and credible claim to have risen from the grave. His life and teachings are preserved in the Gospels. His sacrificial and voluntary death on the cross is the enduring sign that we must all confront. Who is this Man? What is the Meaning of the Message? Who shall open our spiritual eyes to grasp the significance and purpose of our own existence?

We invite you to join us in asking questions and finding answers, "from the Lord, the Spirit" [2 Co 3:18].



O Heavenly King, the Comforter,
The Spirit of Truth,
Who art everywhere and filling all things;
Treasury of Blessings, and Giver of Life,
Come and abide in us,
And cleanse us from every impurity, and
Save our souls, O Good One!
(Orthodox Hymn to the Holy Spirit)

Sacred Places...

Where does a pilgrim go, seeking the place where God encounters Humanity?

There is a sacred place where it begins... and continues: this place is Mount Sinai, in Egypt. This where God appeared to Moses and said:

“I AM whom I AM” (Exodus 3:14)

God simply IS. Can we “prove” (or “disprove”) God’s existence? As the Apostle Paul wrote:

“Ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made.” (Romans 1:20)

Likewise, the Apostles simply proclaimed that Jesus Christ is the Lord, the Son of God. It is a spiritual encounter, not a theory.

Mount Sinai is still a spiritual place: the oldest Christian monastery is there; famous among other things for having preserved the oldest manuscripts of the Bible such as Codex Sinaiticus.

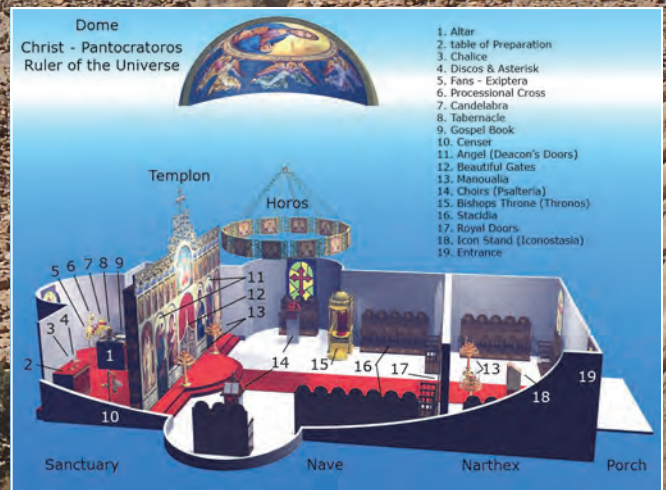
And yes, it is part of the world’s oldest and second largest Christian body: The Orthodox Church.

Start or restart the Quest. Ask Questions. Encounter God. Meet the Christ. Find His Church.



This is the Monastery of Saint Catherine—the oldest in the world. This is where the world's most ancient manuscripts of the Bible were preserved for centuries.

It is ... as one may expect ... an Orthodox monastery and Church.



Asking Questions...

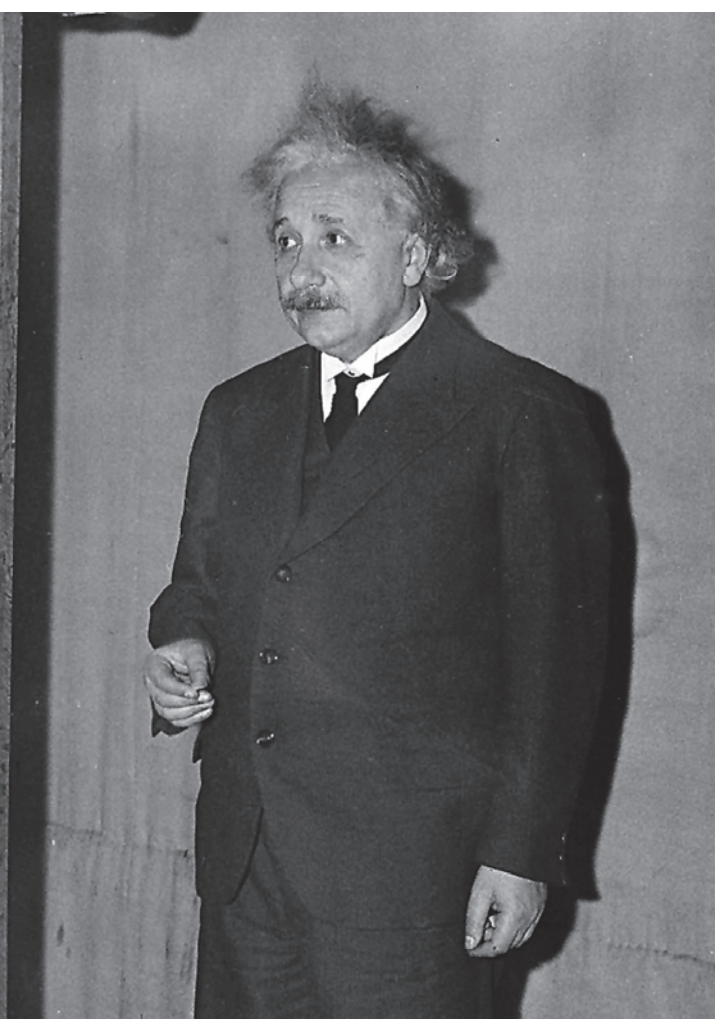
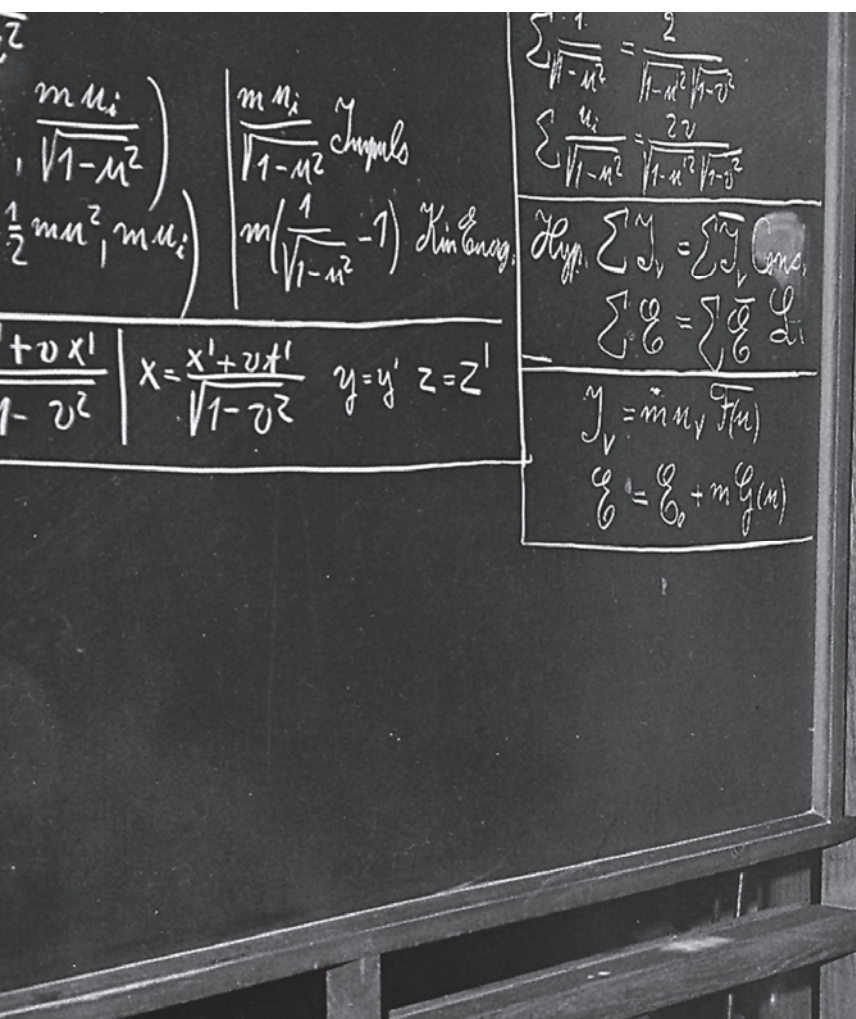
The world agrees: **Albert Einstein** was a great thinker. His secret? Asking the right question. Asking many questions... Once he wondered: what I would see if I ran along a beam of light? Good questions are also critical for physicians: aren't they the only way to find out what is wrong and how to fix it?

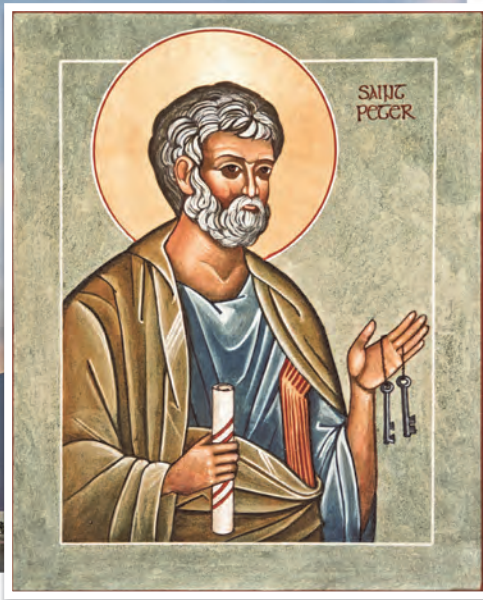
But what about questions about Faith? Faith and Science? Faith and History? Some people are afraid to ask too many questions, afraid to rock their own boat...

Here are some important questions few people ask, except perhaps when they become personal issues.

- ◆ Who decided what books would be in the Bible and when?
- ◆ Is there really a conflict between the Bible and science, faith and reason?
- ◆ Is it true that there is One Church but many denominations? Where should I go?
- ◆ Should infants be baptized? Receive communion? Does it matter? How do we know?

Truth is not afraid of asking questions. It is about asking the right questions and being persistent in finding the right answers.





You may have heard about the Kingdom Tower (photo above). It is to be the highest building in the world, almost a mile high! As the name indicates, it is to be built in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. In the desert! On sand! For sure, they are going to have to pour lots of concrete (“rock”) under there to make it work... Some people are investing a lot of time and money in this project; it better be finished and stand tall: it better not collapse after a few years. This should remind us of the words of Jesus Christ in the Gospel of St Luke:

“Which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, ‘This man began to build, and was not able to finish.’” [Luke 11: 28-30]

Another bit of good advice is also found in the Gospel of St Matthew. After all, we all know that Jesus was “a carpenter” [which also meant contractor], so Jesus could speak even from his own human experience:

“[be] like a wise man who built his house upon the rock; and the rain fell, and the floods came, and

the winds blew and beat upon that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And every one who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house upon the sand; and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell; and great was the fall of it.”

Well, it won’t be raining much in Saudi Arabia, so the Kingdom Tower should be pretty safe – at least – from rain and flooding. But the name “Kingdom Tower” should also remind us of the Kingdom of God. Jesus, the wise builder, also said that he came to build a house or tower: his Church. These are famous words, spoken to the Apostle Peter, often ignored or misunderstood:

“Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of shall not prevail against it.” [Matthew 16:18]

Let’s think about this: being a wise builder and the Lord-Creator himself “through whom all things were made”, Jesus Christ built his Church, his “Kingdom Tower” upon the Rock so that it would stand forever. Not for a 100 years or until His last Apostle would die. Forever means “until the end of the age.”

You can bet on it: the structure established in 33 AD is still here today; it has stood the test of time. Christian communities, in uninterrupted succession. Still there in Jerusalem, Damascus, Corinth, Patmos. It may be time to discover the Church that has stood 2,000 years. Discover a structure build on the rock... the Orthodox Church.

Sacred Texts...

In his controversial best-selling novel *The Da Vinci Code*, **Dan Brown** has a lead character say something amazing and troubling:

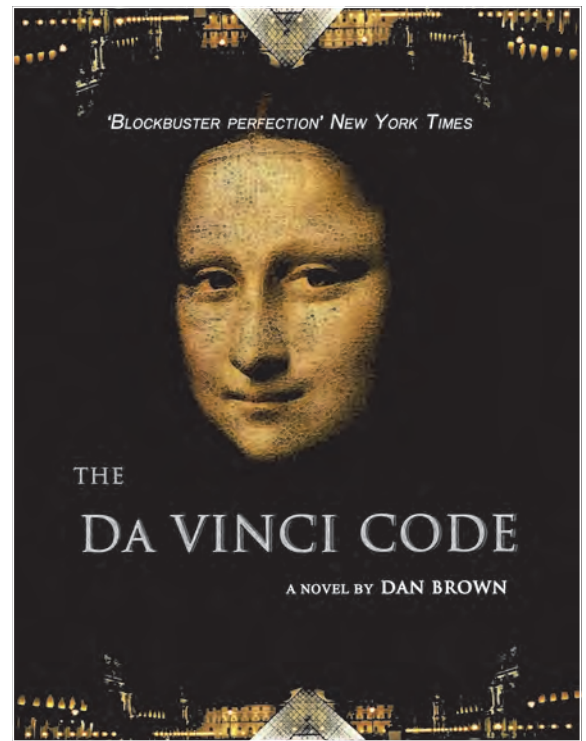
"The fundamental irony of Christianity! The Bible, as we know it today, was collated by the pagan Roman emperor Constantine the Great."

True or false? And behind the controversy, isn't there a really good question? How did the Bible come into existence? So here are...

6 little-known facts about the Bible:

Did you know that...

- ◆ The first time in history that Christians agreed on the books of the New Testament was the year 367 [Constantine was dead then]. Before that, the bishops of the Christian Churches had not yet agreed on the acceptance of such books as 2 Peter and Revelation.
- ◆ The "pillar and foundation of Truth" is... according to the New Testament itself, not the Bible itself but rather... the Church [1Timothy 3:15].
- ◆ The Protestant Bible [for instance the "NIV"] contains 66 books, whereas the Roman Catholic Bible contains 73 books. And the Bible used by Ethiopian Christians contains 81 books. Why? Who is right? Should you care?
- ◆ The first King James Version of 1611 contained 73, not 66 books, with the extra books included between the Old and New Testament as "Apocrypha."
- ◆ The New Testament generally does not cite from the Hebrew Masoretic Old Testament



[copied by the Jews after the first century] but rather from the Greek version of the Old Testament called Septuagint. Have you ever heard about the Septuagint?

- ◆ The Bible used by the ancient Greek-speaking Churches [the ones that literally received and transmitted the Sacred Scriptures since apostolic times, think Corinth or Thessaloniki, in other words the Orthodox Churches], contains $49 + 27 = 73$ books of which 66 are canonical [having universal authority] and 7 are called deuterocanonical, having secondary authority but still part of the Biblical corpus. Why are these books to be included as such? Call us and ask...

If you are wondering about the contents and meaning of the Bible, here is something to think about: why not ask the Church which gave it to the world?



So what about Constantine?

Constantine, whose mother **Helena** was a devout Christian, became the sole emperor of the Roman Empire in 324. In 313, he had issued the Edict of Milan [Edict of Tolerance], which officially tolerated Christianity after almost 3 centuries of persecution [it only became the official religion in 380].

In 325, Constantine invited all the bishops of the known Christian world [within the Roman Empire] to attend a great Council in **Nicaea** [modern-day Turkey]. He himself did not personally participate in the theological deliberations and discussions. However, he did ask the 318 bishops assembled there to make decisions as one body to settle a few questions that were hotly debated and caused much turmoil. For instance, a presbyter [“priest” or “elder”] from Alexandria in Egypt named **Arius** championed the idea that Jesus Christ was creature and there was a time when he [Jesus] did not exist.

Against Arius, the Council affirmed that the Word [or “Message”] of God who became a human being as Jesus existed beyond space and time, because through Him God had made “created the ages” [Hebrews 1:2-3]. Also, if “God is love” [1 John 5:14], it was inconceivable that He would have been a solitary being. Instead, the bishops assembled in the first great council taught that God the Father is always with his co-eternal Word/Son and Spirit.

Not everything was settled at Nicaea in 325. Constantine wanted to sponsor the production of Bibles for the Churches of the main cities of the empire, and it still took a while for the bishops to agree on what books would finally be accepted as belonging in the Bible. For a while, there was ongoing debate about the core beliefs of Christianity, and the Creed [Confession of Faith] begun at Nicaea in 325 was finalized in 381. It is still called the **Creed of Nicaea-Constantinople** and remains to this day the official statement of faith of the Orthodox Church:

I believe in one God the Father almighty, Maker of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible; and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the only-begotten, begotten of the Father before all ages. Light from light; true God from true God; begotten, not made; of the same essence as the Father, through whom all things were made; Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became man. He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered and was buried; and the third day he rose again, according the Scriptures, and ascended into heaven. Who sits at the right hand of the Father; and he shall come again with glory to judge the living and the dead, whose Kingdom shall have no end. And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of life, who proceeds from the Father; who together with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified; who spoke through the Prophets. In one holy, catholic, and apostolic Church; I confess one baptism for the remission of sins; I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the age to come. Amen.

Questions to ponder:

If we are willing to trust these bishops to have preserved and discerned the text and contents of the Bible [including through times of persecution], should we not trust them for other things [doctrine, worship, etc.]

How accurate is it to say as in the Da Vinci Code that “The Bible, as we know it today, was collated by the pagan Roman emperor Constantine the Great?”

One Church...

Many Denominations?



ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS... ABOUT THE EARLY CHURCHES...

What in the world happened to Christianity? How do we go from these early communities to the Crusades, the Inquisition, or even the Reformation? And how do we go from the “mother church in Jerusalem” to more than 5,000 Christian denominations, some of them claiming to be “non-denominational?” Can we really say that “there is one Church but many denominations?”

Here, we must remember our discussion of the “Kindgom Tower” - that if Jesus Christ is to be taken seriously, his Church “built upont the rock” cannot have been swept away by the rain and flood of the ages. Some local churches may have experienced ups and down and moments of crisis; but it is impossible that all of them would have fallen away... The “great apostasy” theory, however popular, must be dismissed.

So what happened to these early churches established in the very beginning, in Jerusalem, Antioch, Damascus, Corinth, Thessaloniki, etc? For a 1,000 years, through centuries of struggles, grace and efforts, this “common union of the churches” was unbroken. In fact, a minor fracture appeared in the year 451, from which the well-known Coptic Church of Egypt separated from the rest of the communion (but the differences were and still are minor and rather obscure)...

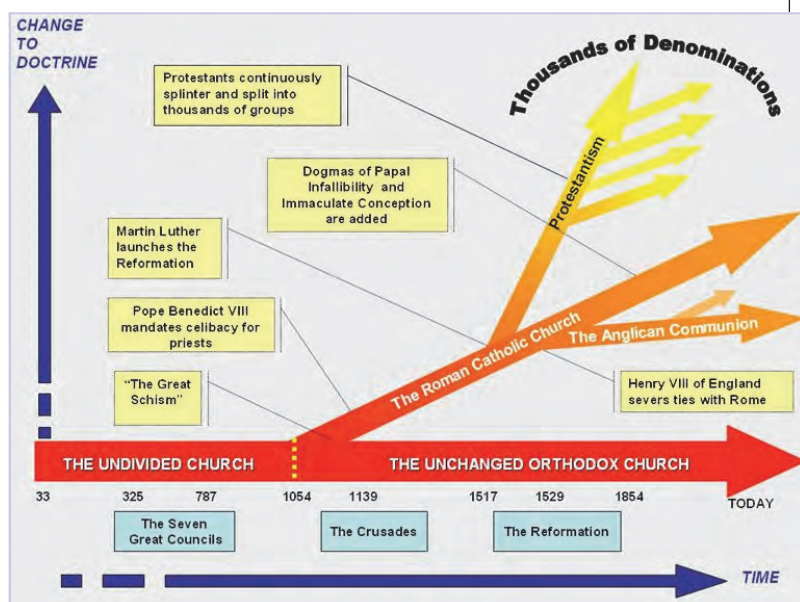
The “Great Schism” in the thousand-year old communion of churches sadly took place in **the year 1054**, as the church of Rome [with it the Western churches] and the Greek-speaking churches of the East separated. From that time on, there is a growing divide between “Latins” and “Greeks.” The crusades [during which Latin knights sacked the Christian churches of the East on their way to Jerusalem] sealed the formation of two distinct and separated Christian bodies: **The Roman Catholic Church** with the power centralized in the office of the bishop of Rome [called Pope], and **the Orthodox Church** which maintained its apostolic structure of being a communion of local churches. In every ancient and biblical city or locale [think “Cyprus” or “Patmos”] in the East, the church continued unchanged, even under the oppression of the Latin crusaders and later of the Ottoman Turks.

From that time on, centralized Western Christendom was able to make unilateral changes and alterations to the once commonly held apostolic deposit: this included changes in the sacraments [baptism by sprinkling instead of immersion, inversion of the order of communion and confirmation], enforced celibacy of all the clergy, alteration of the ancient creed, etc. Some changes were small and minor, others more significant. Eventually, it was the sale of “indulgences” [forgiveness for money] that caused a revolt in Western Christendom. In



1510, Martin Luther reacted [understandably] and launched the **Protestant reformation**. But sadly, instead of restoring the ancient apostolic order and communion with the Church [the Orthodox Church still intact in the East], the reformation was quickly ‘out of control.’ Anyone with a Bible in hand could, under the slogan “**Sola Scriptura**,” start his own group. There appeared Lutherans, Calvinists, Anabaptists, Anglicans, Methodists, Presbyterians, etc. Disconnected from the apostolic churches who still spoke Biblical Greek and had maintained the worship, faith and unity of the ancient Church intact, these groups continued to multiply, to the point of reaching the amazing tally of more than **5,000 post-Reformation [Protestant] denominations** at the turn of the century.

Yet, from Sinai to Jerusalem, from Corinth to Siberia and yes, California, the Orthodox Church remains. Built on the Rock by Jesus Christ and his apostles in the first century... Alive and growing, here and now. And for many, this simple tour of history leads to a great discovery, a pearl of great price...



Sacred Places, Sacred Faces

Christianity is not tied to any particular place, as Jesus, quite amazingly, said at the time [John 4:20-21]:

"Our ancestors worshiped in this mountain, and you people say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship."

Jesus replied, "Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall you worship the Father."

Many sacred places have had an important role to play in human history (they are still in the news today) because God cares about people, and people live in a particular place. The Bible is a book about God and people in relationship, on our human journey of faith, hope and love.

And so, there is a connection between holy places and holy people. In Christian history, major figures are often named after the place where they served, for instance Irenaeus of Lyons [second century] or Basil of Caesarea [fourth century].

Who are these people? Why do they matter at all? What can we learn from sacred places?

Meet the Pre-Nicene Writers...

Here, "Pre-Nicene" means "before Nicaea:" people [Christians] who lived and wrote before the year 325. Why is it important? Because these people were close in time and culture to the times of Jesus and the Apostles. And they lived under constant threat of persecution and martyrdom.

Remember the idea that a stream is most pure as one comes closer to the source?

So it would make sense to read that these people—many of whom died during the horrendous persecutions of the Roman empire—have to say. Yet [and sadly], few spiritual seekers even know who these people are and that their writings are available. Some of these



heroes of faith personally knew the apostles, such as Polycarp of Smyrna who knew the Apostle John. Others were only one link away, such as Irenaeus of Lyons [in modern-day France].

Wouldn't it useful to read what these people have to say?

What about the Post-Nicene Fathers?

These are people who lived and wrote between 325 and 500 AD. They are very important because as Christianity became tolerated and legal [313], they wished to transmit the teachings and memories of the first centuries. For example, St Basil discussed the apostolic origins of many customs universally observed by Christians, such as praying facing East or standing for prayers on Sunday. And Eusebius was commissioned to compile a history of all that had happened in Christian history between the day of Pentecost and Nicaea. Amazing! To go deeper into history is like going up an ancient stream, and there encountering the Orthodox Christian faith.



Left: St Athanasius of Alexandria. As bishop of this important church in Egypt, he was the first, in the year 367 AD, to publish the list of the books of the New Testament. He is seen here wearing the ancient hat and vestment of his office as bishop.

Below: Sacred Places...: Hagia Sophia (Holy Wisdom) was the greatest Christian place of worship ever built (built in 532 and still standing!). But when the city of Constantinople (now Istanbul) fell to the Ottoman Turks in 1452, it was turned into a Mosque (the four towers or "Minarets" were added then). It is now a museum. It is a great illustration, as the Bible says, that "we have no abiding city, but we seek the one to come" (Hebrews 13:14). It is also a reminder that "holy wisdom" is a major theme in the Bible: humanity fell by pursuing earthly wisdom, but the heavenly wisdom will eventually triumph, and this is what we should seek (Genesis 3:6; James 3:15; Revelation 12:1).

Did you know?: the crescent moon symbol of modern Islam is from the Turkish conquest of the center of Eastern Christianity: it was the shape of the moon on that day of 1452 when Constantinople fell...



On Earth as in Heaven...

Rediscovering WORSHIP:

Are human beings supposed to create, invent their own forms of worship? In the Bible, God revealed the “pattern” to Moses and the Prophets after him as they saw the Eternal Worship that always takes place in the Heavens. The angels participate in it: we are called to enter into that eternally existing pattern of worship, not to invent our own...

We know how God’s people in the Old Testament worshiped, and we know how God’s people in the early Church worshiped too because we have writings from eye-witness covering the first 400 years. And it was a time of persecution during which the ancient Church preserved and finalized the Bible.

But contemporary Christianity, especially in America, has become increasingly disconnected from the biblical heavenly pattern of worship, so much that “worship” often means an uplifting rock concert with a catchy message [photo below]. As a result, the Eucharist or Lord’s Supper, once the constitutive moment of ‘being the Church,’ is becoming rare or optional. Lost is any sense of an ascent to the pre-existing pattern seen by Moses, Isaiah, Ezekiel or John in the book of Revelation; it is replaced by a people-and-culture-centric gathering. Through new eyes, the ancient church invites you to rediscover biblical worship and what “on earth as it is in heaven” also means...



The Spirit of Worship according to the New Testament: Hebrews 12:

You have not come to a mountain (Mount Sinai) that can be touched and that is burning with fire; to darkness, gloom and storm; to a trumpet blast or to such a voice speaking words that those who heard it begged that no further word be spoken to them, because they could not bear what was commanded: "If even an animal touches the mountain, it must be stoned to death." The sight was so terrifying that Moses said, "I am trembling with fear."

Rather, you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn whose names are written in heaven.

You have come to God, the Judge of all, to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our "God is a consuming fire."



Above; in heaven: Since the Days of the Patriarch Joseph (Genesis 28) and of Moses (Exodus 25), God's people have worshiped according to the heavenly pattern. This is what was seen by Isaiah (Isaiah 6), Ezekiel (Ezekiel 1) and the Apostle John (Revelation 4). This "temple pattern" has been the normative form of worship since beginning of time because it is an ascent to God's throne. Man-made worship is like the Golden Calf: beat-driven, fashion-dependent, people centric, emotionally charged (Exodus 32).

Below: A Orthodox bishop leads the Church's worship on the Feast of the Resurrection. Orthodox Christian worship has remained unchanged since... as long as we can document Christian worship! It is unchanged from the heavenly pattern revealed in the Bible (Sirach 50).



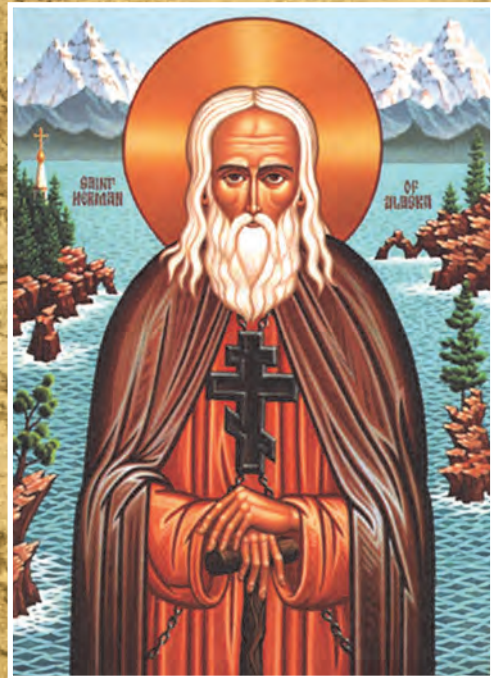
From There to Here...

From Jerusalem to Europe to the United States... From East to West! The Westward journey of Christianity (in its Western form) is well-known. Christopher Columbus, the Mayflower, the Pilgrims. But there is also an East to even-more-East journey. From Jerusalem to Constantinople to Siberia and eventually Alaska and the Pacific Northwest...

In 1794, Orthodox Christian missionaries arrived in Alaska via Siberia from the Monastery of Valaam (modern-day Finland). Soon, the native tribes of Alaska (Aleut, Inuit, Tlingit) embraced this Orthodox Christianity from the ancient East. The southern-most outpost of the Alaskan mission was **Fort Ross**, located on the coast between Humboldt and San Francisco.

In 1836, Fr John Innocent Veniaminov, one of the greatest missionaries in the history of Christianity, sailed from Sitka (where he was the pastor) to Fort Ross, right outside Humboldt Bay! From there, he went to San Francisco and met the Spanish Roman Catholic missionaries before sailing away to Hawaii and St Petersburg. It was North meets South as well as the encounter in America between Eastern and Western Christianity, between "Greek Oriental" and "Roman Catholic."

In 1840, the same Innocent Veniaminov became the first bishop of the American Pacific North West, and ministered from Sitka until 1850... As it happens, **Eureka** was settled in 1850 and the entire North

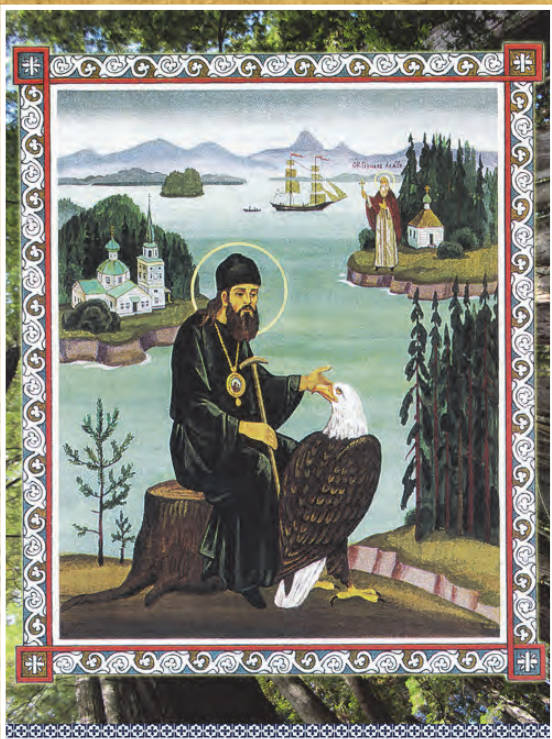


Coast was now being settled by an influx of immigrants coming from Western Europe.

Alaska became a US territory in 1867 but the Orthodox presence remained and increased with the arrival of immigrants from Greece, the Middle East and Eastern Europe.

Bishop Innocent (now known as Saint Innocent) himself died in 1879, 4 years before a beautiful church was built on F street in Eureka. Little did he know that it would eventually be named "St Innocent Orthodox Church" in remembrance of his tireless dedication to the Gospel of Jesus Christ as well as to the culture and welfare of the Native peoples of Alaska.

Icon above: St Herman, one of monks who came from Valaam in the 1700s.



"SAINT INNOCENT OF ALASKA"

- John Innocent Veniaminov (1797-1879)
- First Pastor of Alaska and the Northwest (1824)
- Sails outside Humboldt to Fort Ross (1836)
- First bishop of the Church (1840)
- Defender of the Native peoples and cultures



Above: Eureka's oldest standing temple (1883) on F street, now known as St Innocent Orthodox Church.

Left: St Innocent portrayed with the eagle he nursed back to health.

Bottom: Fort Ross was the southern-most outpost of "Russian America" until 1850. Its historic Orthodox church is still used for prayer services every year on July 4th. Also, an icon of St Innocent meeting the Shaman of Akun Island, discussing his vision of angels.



Greek, Russian, Roman...?

The Orthodox Church today:

◆ Did you know that...

[1] The Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church separated in the year 1054, after 1,000 years of "common union?"

[2] The Orthodox Church internationally is a federation of fully unified national and regional churches, all recognizing the Patriarch of Constantinople (photo to the right) as first-among-equals? The Orthodox Church communion includes:

- ◆ The Patriarchate of Constantinople
- ◆ The Patriarchate of Alexandria
- ◆ The Patriarchate of Antioch
- ◆ The Patriarchate of Jerusalem
- ◆ The Patriarchate of Russia
- ◆ The Patriarchate of Georgia
- ◆ The Patriarchate of Serbia
- ◆ The Patriarchate of Romania
- ◆ The Patriarchate of Bulgaria
- ◆ The Archdiocese of Cyprus
- ◆ The Archdiocese of Greece
- ◆ The Archdiocese of Albania
- ◆ The Metropolia of Poland, Czech Lands, Slovakia
- ◆ The Orthodox Church in America

[3] The Orthodox Church is the oldest, second-largest Christian body, or as the people who live in Biblical lands simply call it, "The Church."

[4] There is no difference between "Greek Orthodox" and "Russian Orthodox" since they all belong to the Orthodox Church. "Greek Orthodox" is sometimes used for all Orthodox Christians. For instance the Treaty of 1867 that purchased Alaska made reference to the "Greek Oriental Church," not the "Russian Orthodox Church."



Photo: Pope Francis, head of the Roman Catholic Church, with Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople, primate of the worldwide Orthodox Christian communion, after prayers for peace in Jerusalem (2014).

On Earth Peace...

Finding Peace in a chaotic world...

The most remarkable feature of the Ancient Christian Faith, as preserved unchanged for 2,000 years in Eastern Christianity, is its experience of peace. The Great Litany of the Orthodox Divine Liturgy begins with this prayer:

"In peace, let us pray to the Lord..." In fact, "peace" is prayed for more than 20 times during a typical Orthodox Christian service. Peace does not just happen, it is received by those who seek:

"Keep on seeking and you will find."

"My peace I give you... not as the world gives you."⁺

Peace is not an intellectual or emotional setup, it is uniquely experienced in the spiritual and liturgical cycle of the historic apostolic Church. It is not just the flickering candles, the ascending clouds of incense, the heavenly gaze of the icons, or the 'a capella' angelic singing, [although these things do help!]; it is an entire state of being. "We have peace with God" writes Saint Paul, hence peace with all of reality, no matter what happens.

There is peace in having found the beauty and truth of the ancient and historic Church, a faith that can be passed on for generations without fear of debates or arguments. It is a house built on the rock where peace reigns. "Come, taste and see, enter into the peace of the kingdom!" [Psalm 34:8; + Matthew 7:7; John 14:27]

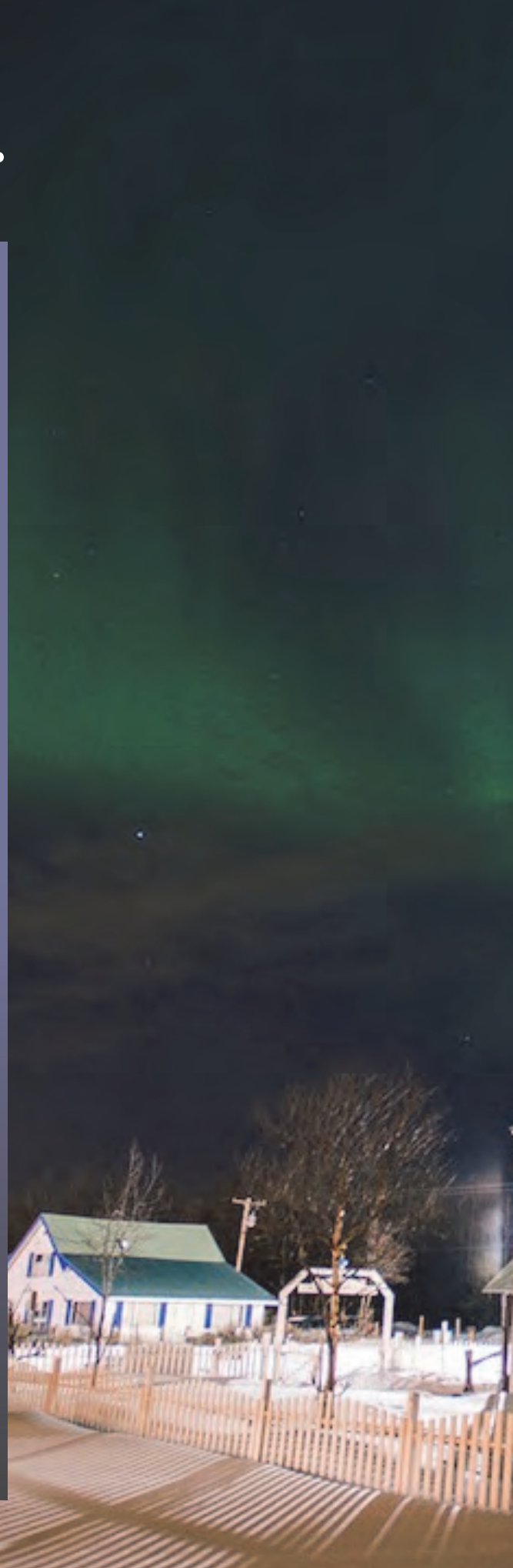


Photo: an historic Orthodox Church in Alaska illuminated by the Northern Lights. Beauty, Glory and Truth often come together:

“And thou shalt make holy garments for Aaron thy brother for glory and for beauty.” (Exodus 28:2)

“Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.” (Psalm 29:2)



“Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas (Peter), then to the twelve. After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; and last of all, as it were to one untimely born, He appeared to me also...”

*St Paul, Apostle & Missionary
1 Corinthians 15:1-8*



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