

Letter to a prisoner.

The place of the Bible and the church. The relationship of the Old Testament and the New Testament. Jewish practices.

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From: Priest Seraphim Holland PO 37, McKinney, TX 75070 to: ... Date: Aug 11/24 2019

Dear ...:

Blessed is God Who is truth, and leads us to all truth! Blessed is God, who magnifies our weak efforts! Blessed is God, has given us the Church to keep us safe and grow to perfection!

I am replying to your letter dated ... I will not be at the unit this coming week, because it is a great feast day. It is the feast day of the Dormition of the mother of God. I will include something in the letter about that. I have made a joke many times that I wish that I had bodies for each one of my personalities. That would mean I could be in multiple places at the same time, but since I have only one body, I have to be at my parish because it's such an important day.

You mentioned in your letter that you have a million questions. You should commence to asking them. If they are written down, I have a chance to reply to you by letter, or when we meet again. If you don't ask a question, I guarantee you that I will not try to answer it! The only way you will get answers to your questions for me is if you ask them, or if something I write somehow, answers one of your questions by serendipity. Of course, I am a Christian so I don't really believe in serendipity. Everything has meaning. That being said, it's a whole lot easier to write letters when I have specific things to write about. That is a very unsubtle hint.

You told me you are familiar with about what Bible says cover to cover. I do not mean to be insulting, but I would like to challenge that. I would challenge you to really understand the meaning of the following chapters of the Bible: Genesis chapter 1, John 3, 6, 17, and Romans 6. That will keep you out of trouble for a long time! ☺

The Orthodox Church understands the Bible, because the Bible came out of the experience of the church. It is not the other way around. The Bible does not define what the church believes. The church defines what the Bible is. It came out of the life of the church, led by the Holy Spirit, and can only be interpreted by the church. When I was a Protestant, there were many things that I did not understand, because I was reading it without understanding that the church wrote it. Of course, a Protestant thinks the church wrote the Bible, but the church is an ephemeral thing for them. It is an invisible thing. I assure you the church is very visible. Perhaps I have added to your million questions with what I just wrote. Well, get out your pencil.

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I agree with you about Protestant services. I do not doubt any man's sincerity, nor do I doubt that God can reach anybody He wants, because His grace is sufficient, and the light is more powerful than the darkness. Nonetheless, the Lord has revealed to us the church, and an orderly way of worship. That way of worship must be in Spirit and Truth, and must be what the soul requires. We cannot worship with loudness and cacophony. We cannot worship with songs that sound more secular than sacred. We cannot worship with songs that are shallow in their theology. Certainly, divine worship is not a show, although it has dramatic elements. But those dramatic elements are quiet, and not "loud".

Most people do not understand what their purpose is. That is my standard question to people. I don't know if I asked you. I might've, and I might've forgotten. Nonetheless, tell me what you think your purpose is and how will you achieve it. If we understand our purpose in life, we understand how God made us, why he made us, and what the incarnation does to help

us achieve our purpose. We also understand what salvation is. It is not remotely like the songs in your average church that has a coffee bar in front of it.

The problem with the Jehovah's Witnesses, is that they hold to a heresy. They hold to the heresy of Arianism. They believe that Jesus Christ is the highest created being. If that were to be true, then Jesus Christ is a liar and a fraud. Or at least He would be a very deluded human being, because Jesus Christ was well aware that He and God are equal, because he is one essence with the Father. Since He is one essence with Father, He is also uncreated like the Father, and like the Father and the Spirit, participated in the creation of everything in the universe that is not God.

You are correct that the New Testament is a fulfillment of the Old Testament. Every page of the Old Testament points to the New. It points to the new in a dark way, and an obscure way, but sometimes also a very clear way. Many things in the Old Testament have been fulfilled, and they have been superseded in Christian life. We can see this by the Council of the Apostles that is spoken about in the Acts. There were Jewish practices that the Apostles said no longer applied to Christians. For instance, one of those was circumcision, which in the Old Testament was a type of baptism. You do not need to type, that is, something that points to the reality, when you have the reality. That is why we no longer practice the Passover meal, although it is fashionable for Christians to do this Jewish Seder thing. We don't do that because Christ is the Paschal Lamb, and He was sacrificed once and for all. It is incorrect, and theologically illiterate to practice the Jewish Passover. Instead, we partake of the body and blood of Jesus Christ, not new each time, but the same each time.

We no longer hold to the Jewish rules about foods, because God made it clear that all things are clean for Christians. Christians are what Jews should have become. Of course, some Jews did become Christians but the majority rejected this truth, and they became the religion without direction. May God save them! I do not question any man's sincerity, and I respect anyone who believes something with sincerity, but part of sincere belief is knowing what is true and what is false.

We can talk more about Jewish practices. I think it's a mistake to try to maintain Jewish practices as a Christian. We have Christian practices. Many of them came from Jewish practices and have been changed, according to the new reality.

Thank you regarding my son +Daniel. There is no salvation without pain. Pain comes from the things we experience but in a true Christian, we have more pain just from experiencing things in our heart, in our daily life. I recently wrote something about that in another letter:

"You made quite a statement in your letter what you said you are privately thankful because of your incarceration. Certainly, your incarceration must've led to some kinds of enlightenment, since with God, nothing is wasted. I've said that I would never ask God to bring back my son +Daniel. There is been grace from his death, but also in much pain. I suppose that's the same with being in prison. For those who learn, as God teaches them, there is grace, it is always accompanied by pain. Even if this pain is not from specific environmental factors, it is from within, because I'm absolutely convinced, as I read the father's, that there is no salvation without pain in our heart. Our Lord Jesus Christ showed that he lived with great pain in his heart. He wept, and He gave himself no rest. He set his face toward Jerusalem even from the day of His birth. We are emulating him, even if in only a weak way."

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May God bless you and help you in all things!

Priest Seraphim Holland

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