

ORTHODOX TEACHINGS.

**THE CATECHESIS OF THE ONE, HOLY,
CATHOLIC AND APOSTOLIC EASTERN
ORTHODOX CHURCH ACCORDING TO
HOLY SCRIPTURES AND SACRED
APOSTOLIC TRADITION.**



VOLUME 1

**BY
HIS EMINENCE
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Metropolitan of Pelusium
(Port Said, Damietta, Mansoura, Qantara)**

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*IN MEMORY OF MY FATHER
PANTELIS M. LAMPADARIOS
&
WITH LOVE TO MY MOTHER
KALIOPE LAMPADARIOU.*



ΠΑΤΡΙΑΡΧΕΙΟΝ ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΕΙΑΣ ΚΑΙ ΠΑΣΗΣ ΑΦΡΙΚΗΣ

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His Grace Panteleimon
Bishop of Ghana
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Your Grace,

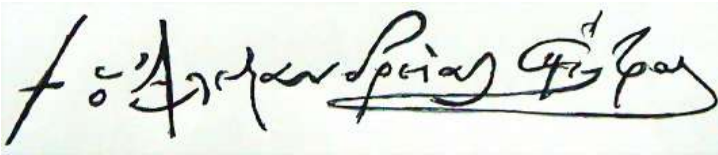
We have received your letter dated 2nd August 2004, in which you inform us of the completion of your significant work titled “Orthodox Teachings. The Catechesis of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Eastern Orthodox Church according to the Holy Scriptures and the Apostolic Tradition”, and for its publication we express in this Patriarchal Communication our joy and pleasure for the result achieved.

The above-mentioned work, because it is the result of lengthy study and methodical work, as well as sensible processing and an intelligible presentation of the very important principles of the Faith and function of the Church, indicates your deep ecclesiastical conscience. It is also certain that it will become a significant help for the native students, the catechists, the candidates for the Priesthood, and the priests, as well as for the catechumen and newly-enlightened faithful of the Orthodox Church on the African continent, while it will at the same time for ever witness to your great personal contribution to the

expansion and development of the Vineyard planted by our Lord Jesus Christ.

For this reason, praying for the total success of very high and holy objectives of this publication, in which much hard work and obvious interest for the service of the faithful children of the Orthodox Church are completely condensed, and bestowing our paternal and Patriarchal blessing on all who will have recourse to it and will study it, we congratulate you on the success of your holy expectations and embrace you with a holy kiss.

Your dear Brother in Christ.

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light green background. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style and appears to be in Arabic script. It consists of several connected loops and curves, ending in a long, sweeping underline.

PETROS VII

Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa.

In the Great City of Alexandria, 3rd August 2004.

A decorative header featuring a cross on the left and a line of Coptic script in a highly stylized, calligraphic font.

Ref. no. 274

Your Eminence Metropolitan of Pelusium, beloved brother and concellabrant of My Humbleness, Panteleimon, may the Grace and Peace of God be with Your Eminence.

With these Patriarchal Letters we express our gratitude and congratulations upon receiving from the 23rd February your letter, by which you informed us about the completion of the writing of your new book entitled “*The Orthodox Teachings*”.

This publication is in fact a very useful book for all the English speaking priests and all the faithful and it is an achievement of your spiritual work.

For this reason, thanking you and congratulating you, we heartfully pray for more achievements for the benefit of the Missionary and Pastoral work, we embrace you with sacred love in Christ.

A handwritten signature in Coptic script, written in black ink on a light yellow background. The signature is highly stylized and appears to read 'Theodoros II'.

THEODOROS II
Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa.

In the Great City of Alexandria
The 1st April 2005

NOTE FROM AUTHOR.

The “*Orthodox Teachings. The Catechesis of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Eastern Orthodox Church According to Holy Scriptures and Sacred Apostolic Tradition*” is the fruit of many years of research, which began in 1987, when I, through God’s Grace, served as a humble servant in the Ancient Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria and All Africa. During my diakonia, which began in South Africa (18th December 1987) until this very moment as the first Bishop of the newly established Holy Diocese of Ghana, I realized the great need for a proper Catechesis book concerning the Teachings of our Orthodox Christian Faith.

The purpose of this book is to enlighten all the English speaking Orthodox Christians, Greeks and Africans and all those who desire knowledge of the Truth, so that they may be informed about all the Teachings and Doctrines that are taught by Holy Scripture and Apostolic Tradition. For this reason the “*Orthodox Teachings*” is based upon the two sources of Divine Revelation, Holy Scripture (Old and New Testament) and Apostolic Tradition. Following the teachings of the holy Apostles and the Fathers of the Orthodox Church, this book will present to the reader the clear teachings of the Orthodox Faith enriched by many biblical references and opinions of the great and holy Fathers, ecclesiastic writers and Scholars of

the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Eastern Orthodox Church.

If anyone truly wishes to love God, then he must know about Him. If anyone truly loves Christ, then he will practice His Commandments. But, how can anyone practice God's Commandments, if he ignores His Teachings? To know Christ means that one knows His Teachings. Ignorance of the Teachings of Holy Scripture means ignorance of Christ. If we ignore our own Lord and Saviour, how can we achieve our Salvation and Sanctification in Christ?

The "*Orthodox Teachings*" is divided into seven parts, each dealing with the essential Teachings and Doctrines of the Orthodox Church concerning God, Creation, Salvation, the Church, Holy Mysteries, End of Days, Christ's Second Coming, the Resurrection of the dead, the Universal Judgment and the Everlasting Blessedness of the righteous and the eternal punishment of the sinners.

I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude to Nicholas I. Lykakis and Miss Evangelia G. Nyktari for their assistance in proof reading and corrections. A special thanks go to the members of the OCMC (Orthodox Christian Mission Center, Florida, U.S.A.), Mrs. Evelyn Pappas, Mr. Joshua Geleris and Mr. Christopher Bundros. Finally, I express my deepest gratitude to my friends in Port Elizabeth - South

Africa, Mr. and Mrs. Dimitri and Marguerite Paizis for all their help and assistance in correcting the English text.

I pray that this humble effort will bring forth its fruits for the glory of our God, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

A handwritten signature in Greek script, reading "Ἁγίου Παντελεΐμου" (of the Holy Panteleimon). The signature is written in dark ink on a light blue background.

+PANTELEIMON
Metropolitan of Pelusium.

Port Said - Egypt, 18th January, 2005.
Ss Athanasius and Cyrill, Patriarchs of Alexandria.

INTRODUCTION.

Saint Mark the Evangelist, founder of the Orthodox Church of Alexandria - Egypt.

The first information concerning the history of the Orthodox Church of Alexandria is found in Holy Scripture. In the book of Acts, St. Mark the Apostle and Evangelist, is mentioned as having a second name, John¹. The first ecclesiastic writer who refers to St. Mark is the Evangelist St. Luke.² According to the book of Acts, “*there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men*” from “*Egypt, and the parts of Libya about Cyrene.*”³ In Jerusalem there were representatives from the Synagogues of Alexandria and Cyrene.⁴ Lucius of Cyrene was considered a leading member of the first disciples in Antioch, many having been from Cyrene.⁵ They were eyewitnesses to the events of the Day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit descended upon the holy Apostles in the form of “*cloven tongues like as of fire.*”⁶ These men returning from Jerusalem to Egypt, brought the good news of Christ’s Teachings and prepared the path for the acceptance of the Orthodox Christian Faith by the people of the African Continent.⁷

¹ Acts 12:12, 25; 13:5, 13; 15:37.

² Acts 12:12.

³ Acts 2:5, 10. Papadopoulos, «Mark», in *Eccl. Pharos*, v. 4, p. 197.

⁴ Acts 6:9.

⁵ Acts 11:20. 13:1,

⁶ Acts 2: 1-6.

⁷ Demitsas, *Alexandria*, p. 695.

The Evangelist Mark became a disciple and “interpreter”⁸ of St. Peter the Apostle. «Mark, having become Peter’s interpreter, wrote down accurately everything he remembered, though not in order, of the things either said or done by Christ. For he neither heard the Lord nor followed Him, but afterward, as I said, followed Peter, who adapted his teachings as needed but had no intention of giving an ordered account of the Lord’s sayings. Consequently Mark did nothing wrong in writing down some things as he remembered them, for he made it his one concern to not omit anything which he heard or to make any false statement in them.»⁹ He was related to St. Barnabas¹⁰ and he introduced,¹¹ founded¹² and became the first Bishop of the Alexandrian Church.¹³

St. Mark, according to some scholars, was born in Cyrene of Pentapolis and was the son of Aristoboulos and Mary.¹⁴ Others support the opinion that he was an

⁸ Eusebius, *Church History*, book I, in Migne, *P.G.*, 19, 539; Ibid, *Church History*, book II, in Migne, 19, 559; Ibid, *Temporum*, II, in Migne, *P.G.*, 19, 648. Joel, *Chronographia*, in Migne, *P.G.*, 139, 248C. Demitsas, *Alexandria*, p. 642. St. Irenaeus, *Heresies*, book II, ch. 1, § 1, in Hadjephraimides, p. 190.

⁹ Papias, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 316. Eusebius, *Church History*, book III, ch. XXXIX, in Migne, *P.G.*, 20, 300B-C.

¹⁰ Col. 4: 10.

¹¹ Eusebius, *Church History*, book II, ch. XVI, in Migne, *P.G.*, 20, 173. Ibid, *Church History*, book II, in Migne, *P.G.*, 19, 539-540.

¹² Joel, *Chronographia*, in Migne, *P.G.*, 139, 248C.

¹³ Eusebius, *Church History*, book II, in Migne, *P.G.*, τόμ. 19, 543c. Ibid, *Church History*, book II, ch. XV, XVI, in Migne, *P.G.*, 20, 172, 173. Demitsas, *Alexandria*, p. 695. Mazarakis, *Contribution*, p. 5. Gialourakis, *Egypt*, p. 24.

¹⁴ *Martyrdom of St. Mark*, in Migne, *P.G.*, 115, 164-165, 168-169. Cf. Sidarous, *Patriarcats*, p. 60. Zogheb, *Études*, p. 209. Macaire, *Histoire*, p. 23. Kyrillos II, “Le voyage”, p. 384.

Alexandrian Jew who lived with his parents in Jerusalem where they had their home.¹⁵ According to tradition St. Mark's mother was baptized by her brother, St. Barnabas,¹⁶ and St. Mark was baptized by St. Peter.¹⁷

St. Mark, according to the book of Acts, had two names, "*John*" and "*Mark*," the first being his Jewish name and the latter, his Roman name.¹⁸ "*And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem, when they had fulfilled their ministry, and took with them John, whose surname was Mark.*"¹⁹ Some scholars expressed the opinion that there were more than one Mark,²⁰ but this theory was proved wrong.²¹

St. John Chrysostom notes that the Evangelist used the name "*Mark*"²² only occasionally. It is strongly believed that Mark is the young man who "*having a linen cloth cast about his naked body; and the young men laid hold on him: And he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked,*"²³ and that our Lord had the Last Supper with His Disciples²⁴ at his mother's house.

¹⁵ Papadopoulos, *History*, p. 47. Acts 12: 12.

¹⁶ *Acta*, June, p. 421.

¹⁷ Felten, Marcus, in *Kirchenlexikon*, v. VIII, p. 672

¹⁸ Siskos, *Organosis*, p. 71. Papadopoulos, «Mark», in *Eccl. Pharos*, p. 194.

¹⁹ Acts 12: 25.

²⁰ Tillemont, *Memoires*, p. 99.

²¹ *Acta*, April III, p. 344. Septem. VII, p. 379. Cf. J. Felten, Marcus. in *Kirchenlexikon*, v. VIII, p. 671.

²² St. John Chrysostom, *To Acts*, Homily XXVIII, in Migne, *P.G.*, 60, 211β.

²³ Mark 14:51.

²⁴ Mark 14:12-25.

St. Hippolytus notes the following detail: “*Mark the Evangelist, Bishop of Alexandria*” was one of the “*seventy two disciples who turned their backs on Christ when He said, ‘If you do not eat My flesh and drink My blood, you are not worthy of Me*”²⁵ ...*but through Peter he returned and was filled with the Holy Spirit.*”²⁶

St. Mark accompanied St. Paul and St. Barnabas during their first journey from Antioch to Perga of Pamphylia where he abandoned them and returned to Jerusalem, for he was afraid of the dangerous²⁷ and difficult work of the Apostolic Mission. In 51 A.D. St. Paul began his second Apostolic Mission but he “*thought (it was) not good to take him (Mark) with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work. And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed as under one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus; and Paul chose Silas.*”²⁸

St. John Chrysostom notes that this argument was beneficial for St. Mark in two ways: on the one hand because St. Paul’s strictness averted his weakness whereas St. Barnabas’s virtuous character on the other hand, made him stronger. Thus the disagreement between the two men had the same beneficial result because St. Paul, seeing the

²⁵ Cf. John 6:53-60.

²⁶ St. Hippolytus, in Migne, *P.G.*, 10, 956A. Cf. Dorotheus of Tyros, in Migne, *P.G.*, 92, 530. Procopius, in Migne, *P.G.*, 100, 1189. Tillemont, *Memoires*, p. 546.

²⁷ Acts 15: 38. Cf. Sidarous, *Patriarcats*, p. 61. St. John Chrysostom, *To Acts*, Homily XXXIV, in Migne, *P.G.*, 60, 247β. Kyrillos II, “*Le voyage*”, p. 385.

²⁸ Acts 15: 38-39.

young man's readiness to abandon the work of the Gospel, was concerned for him, whereas St. Barnabas, recognising his capabilities, embraced him with love and understanding. Consequently, without being disgraced, the disciple was corrected by the actions of the two great teachers, who argued not for vainglory, but for his Salvation.²⁹

Subsequently St. Mark accompanied St. Barnabas to Cyprus and other countries, preaching Christianity until he became the "*companion*" of St. Peter and wrote his Gospel based on the oral teachings of St. Peter.³⁰

Papadopoulos believes that St. Mark wrote his Gospel when St. Peter was in Asia Minor, after his departure from Jerusalem and Antioch.³¹

Sidarous supports the opinion that St. Mark followed St. Peter to Rome, where he wrote his Gospel.³²

Demitsas says that St. Mark remained for a short period in Alexandria until he was forced, during the eleventh year of Nero's reign, to depart for Rome. There

²⁹ St. John Chrysostom, *To Acts*, Homily XXXIV, in Migne, *P.G.*, 60, 247β.

³⁰ Siskos, *Organosis*, p. 72. Eusebius, *Church History*, book III, ch. XXXIX, in Migne, *P.G.*, 20, 300B-C. Some informations are found in the apocrypha book "Trips and martyrdom of St. Barnabas, the Apostle", which appears to have St. Mark as its author. Tischendorf, *Apocrypha*, pp. 64-74. *Acta*, Junii II, pp. 431-436. Papadopoulos, «Mark», in *Eccl. Pharos*, v. 4, pp. 173-174, 201.

³¹ Papadopoulos, *History*, p. 54. Acts 15. Gal. 2:11.

³² Sidarous, *Patriarcats*, p. 63.

the faithful asked him to write the Gospel, which bears his name.³³

Eusebius notes: “*The teachings of St. Peter had a great influence upon the people, that it was not enough once or twice to attend the teachings, nor that they should remain unwritten. Therefore, in many ways, they beseeched Mark to write the Gospel which bears his name, in order to recall the teachings which were passed down to them.*»³⁴

After his departure from Asia Minor, St. Mark visited Egypt. He disembarked at Cyrene, Pentapolis, where, according to tradition, he had been born. As he preached and taught, many miracles occurred.³⁵ By Divine Revelation he was instructed by the Lord to go to the Great City of Alexandria and to teach the word of God.

The beginning of Christianity in Egypt however, was under a veil of ignorance³⁶ until the time of Bishop Demetrios (189-232 A.D.), who, in the history of the Church of Alexandria, was the first Bishop with sovereign authority over all the land of Egypt.³⁷ Demetrios' authority was by no means accidental and it formed the foundations of the administrative system of the Greek

³³ Joel, *Chronographia*, in Migne, *P.G.*, 139, 248C.

³⁴ Eusebius, *Church History*, book II, ch. XV, XVI, in Migne, *P.G.*, 20, 172, 173. *Fragments of Papias*, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 325.

³⁵ Siskos, *Organosis*, p. 73. Papadopoulos, «Mark», in *Eccl. Pharos*, v. 4, p. 203. *Martyrdom of St. Mark*, in Migne, *P.G.*, 115, 164B and 168ΣΤ.

³⁶ Duchesne, *Histoire*, p. 330.

³⁷ Harnack, *Mission*, p. 450.

Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria and of All Africa, which St. Mark had established.³⁸

The narratives concerning St. Mark's acts and the traditions connected with the evangelism to Christianity of Egypt, have been preserved in writings of his successors.³⁹ St. Mark established the Greek Orthodox Church of Alexandria shortly before his last collaboration with St. Paul.⁴⁰

Scholars have expressed different opinions concerning the date of the establishment of the Greek Orthodox Church of Alexandria. Papadopoulos and Siskos believe it was the year 60 A.D.,⁴¹ whereas Kyrillos II believes it to be in 61 A.D.⁴² In his article Kyrillos reverses Renan's opinion, who stated that St. Mark never visited Egypt.⁴³ Zogheb claims the year to be 42 A.D.⁴⁴ and Sidarous the year 43 A.D.⁴⁵

From Alexandria St. Mark visited Rome where he met St. Paul who assigned him a special mission to the Churches of Asia Minor.⁴⁶ St. Paul wrote to the Colossians: "*...saluteth you, and Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas, (touching whom ye received commandments: if*

³⁸ Papadopoulos, «Mark», in *Eccl. Pharos*, v. 4, pp. 175-176.

³⁹ Migne, *P.G.*, 111, 889.

⁴⁰ Papadopoulos, «Mark», in *Eccl. Pharos*, v. 4, pp. 201-202, 204. *Acta*, v. Jun. II, p. 421. October. XII, p. 424.

⁴¹ Papadopoulos, *History*, pp. 54, 58. Siskos, *Organosis*, p. 72.

⁴² Kyrillos II, "Le voyage", p. 382.

⁴³ *Ibid*, p. 382.

⁴⁴ Zogheb, *Études*, p. 210.

⁴⁵ Sidarous, *Patriarcats*, p. 61.

⁴⁶ Siskos, *Organosis*, p. 73.

he comes unto you, receive him).”⁴⁷ At the end of the year 62 or the beginning of 63 A.D., St. Mark returned to Egypt passing through Cyrene. Having found a large number of Christians in Alexandria, St. Mark dedicated himself to the spreading of the Word.

Alexandria first organized its church according to the ancient system of parishes, which is believed to be earlier than any of the other churches.⁴⁸

During the celebration of the pagan feasts in honour of the false god “*Serapis*,” St. Mark was arrested by the fanatic idolaters on Easter, 23rd April 63 A.D. (26th Farmuthi, according to Egyptian calendar.)⁴⁹ The crowds tied a rope around St. Mark’s neck and then tortured him by dragging his body all day long through the main streets of Alexandria.⁵⁰ This terrible suffering continued the following day, 24th April 63 A.D. until St. Mark gave up his spirit to his Lord Whom he had served faithfully, thanking Him for being honoured to suffer Martyrdom for His Name’s sake.⁵¹ These details are to be found in later Arabic and Coptic literature, which deal with the history of the Church of Alexandria.⁵²

⁴⁷ Col. 4:10.

⁴⁸ Papadopoulos, «Mark», in *Eccl. Pharos*, v. 4, p. 208.

⁴⁹ *Martyrdom of St. Mark*, in Migne, *P.G.*, 115, 168Z.

⁵⁰ Siskos, *Organosis*, p. 73. *Acta*, pp. 347-349.

⁵¹ *Martyrdom of St. Mark*, in Migne, *P.G.*, 115, 168Z. Siskos, *Organosis*, p. 73. Demitsas, *Alexandria*, p. 695.

⁵² Sollerii, “De sancti”. *Acta*, v. Junii V, p. 1. Lipsius, *Die apokryphen*, v. III, p. 329. Bolotow, «Day», v. LXXIII, pp. 426-430. Compare also the small article of Kyrillos II, “Le voyage”, *Bulletin*, No 7, pp. 381-406. In this article Kyrillos II has many mistakes.

There are great differences in the opinions of many scholars as to the exact date of St. Mark's Martyrdom. Zogheb and Sidarous believe the date to be 25th April 62 A.D.,⁵³ while Papadopoulos considers the date as being 4th April 63 A.D.⁵⁴

No matter how one regards the role of St. Mark in the establishment of the Orthodox Church in Alexandria, he certainly converted many Greeks, Romans, Jews and Egyptians to the Orthodox Christian Faith.⁵⁵

According to Eusebius, St. Mark appointed Annianus (63-86 AD) as his successor as the Bishop of the Great City of Alexandria.⁵⁶ St. Mark ordained one Bishop of Alexandria, and since then the one bishop for all the presbyters and churches of the land of Egypt became traditional.⁵⁷

Unfortunately, the concise history of the first century of the Greek Orthodox Church of Alexandria

⁵³ Zogheb, *Études*, p. 21. Sidarous, *Patriarcats*, p. 63.

⁵⁴ Papadopoulos, *History*, p. 61. Concerning St. Mark's martyrdom see: Papadopoulos, *History*, pp. 62-63. Ibid, «Mark», in *Eccl. Pharos*, v. 4, p. 175. Macaire, *Histoire*, p. 24. Zogheb, *Études*, p. 210. Kyrillos II, "Le voyage", p. 385 and 401. Palladius, *Lausaica*, ch. 113. Sidarous, *Patriarcats*, p. 63.

⁵⁵ Eusebius, *Temporum*, II, in Migne, *P.G.*, 19, 647, 648. Demitsas, *Alexandria*, p. 695. Papadopoulos, *History*, p. 159. Siskos, *Organosis*, p. 73.

⁵⁶ Eusebius, *Church History*, book II, ch. XXIV, in Migne, *P.G.*, 20, 205. Ibid, *Chronicorum*, book II, in Migne, *P.G.*, 19, 543c; Ibid, *Temporum*, II, in Migne, *P.G.*, 19, 647. Cf. *Martyrdom of St. Mark*, in Migne, *P.G.*, 115, 168A. Siskos, *Organosis*, p. 73. *Dictionary*, v. A-D, p. 118. The Copts and Arabs refer to him with the name: "Anania".

⁵⁷ *Martyrdom of St. Mark*, in Migne, *P.G.*, 115, 168A.

remains unknown.⁵⁸ The period of persecutions of the Christian Church by the Roman Empire, local governors and rulers made it very difficult for Christianity to spread its message.⁵⁹ Eusebius, a historian and ecclesiastical writer, was an eyewitness to the cruelty of the persecutions and he recorded a list of Martyrs of Alexandria who had Greek names.⁶⁰

WHAT IS THE EASTERN ORTHODOX CHURCH

AND

WHY SHOULD ONE BECOME AN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN?

In today's society, one finds innumerable so-called "churches," each and every one of which proclaims "*they are the church of Christ*"!!! In America alone, there are more than 3,600 different Christian beliefs whereas in Africa there are more than 1,000. These Christian beliefs proclaim the Gospel, but in their own way and according to their own interpretation. Did our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ give such instruction or authority to anyone to establish "*his own church*"? Did Christ give the authority to anyone to split up or divide His Church? Or has Christ established only One Church, which is His Mystical Body?

⁵⁸ Siskos, *Organosis*, p. 75.

⁵⁹ Gialourakis, *Egypt*, p. 25.

⁶⁰ Eusebius, *Church History*, in Migne, book VI, ch. XLI, P.G., 20, 605-612.

Christ gave explicit instructions to the Holy Apostles to “*Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you.*”⁶¹ He also emphasised that He is the “*True Vine*” and His disciples were “*the branches.*”⁶² He continued: “*He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned.*”⁶³

Jesus Christ has not given the authority to anyone to set up his or her own church, as so many heretics do these days for their own benefit. But rather, He commanded His holy Disciples to teach all those who believe in His Name “*to observe all things*” as He has instructed. So it is possible that one may confess faith in Jesus Christ as being the Son of God but, at the same time, because of stubbornness one may refuse to accept and to “*observe all things*” that were instructed by Him, His Apostles and His Church.

The question arises: Are these new Christian beliefs from God or are they manmade movements that seek to mislead those who desire to know and believe in Jesus Christ? Are these groups the fulfillment of the prophetic words of Christ Who warned us saying: “*Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves,*”⁶⁴ and

⁶¹ Matth. 28: 19-20.

⁶² John 15:5.

⁶³ John 15: 5-6.

⁶⁴ Matth. 7:15.

elsewhere He said: *“Then if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or ‘There!’ do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.”*⁶⁵

St. Paul the Apostle of the Gentiles, speaking to *“the Elders of the Church”* in Miletos (Asia Minor) stressed: *“I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.”*⁶⁶

St. Peter in his Second Epistle teaches us: *“But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord Who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed.”*⁶⁷

WHEN WAS THE EASTERN ORTHODOX CHURCH ESTABLISHED?

The answer to this question is found in the New Testament. Its establishment goes back to the beginning of the first Christian community on the Day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit descended upon the Twelve Apostles and all who were gathered in the Upper Room. This is the

⁶⁵ Matth. 24: 23-24.

⁶⁶ Acts 20: 17, 29-30.

⁶⁷ 2 Peter 2:1-2.

birthday of the Orthodox Church when the first Christian community began and all those who were baptized “*continued steadfastly in the Apostles’ Doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.*”⁶⁸

This first community was a Jewish-Greek Christian community, which from Jerusalem spread to Judea, Samaria, Antioch, Cyprus, throughout Asia Minor to Greece and to the far corners of the Roman Empire (see the book of Acts and Epistles).

The Orthodox Church began with the teachings of the holy Apostles and was encouraged by St. Paul to “*stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle.*”⁶⁹ Elsewhere he strictly instructed the faithful “*in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ*” to “*withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which you received from us.*”⁷⁰

The Doctrines taught by Christ and His holy Apostles were to be protected by the Church of the living God, which is the “*pillar and ground of the Truth.*”⁷¹

THE APPEARANCE OF HERESIES.

What is heresy?

⁶⁸ Acts 2:42.

⁶⁹ 2 Thess. 2:15.

⁷⁰ 2 Thess. 3:6.

⁷¹ 2 Thess. 3: 6.

Heresy is the misinterpretation of the Gospel's Teachings. Heresy is the false teaching that is presented by false prophets, false apostles and false teachers as being the Gospel Truth while at the same time they present God's Truth as a lie.

Heresy is the fruit of man's pride. When a man believes that he is able to interpret the Gospel without the guidance and experience of the Church, he is led astray. The fruits of heresy lead a heretic to spiritual destruction and eternal condemnation. The heretics "*ignore the truth and add lies and vain genealogies. The phenomenal truth, which they construct with evilness, misleads the thought of those who are less experienced and enslaves them by twisting the words of the Lord and they become evil interpreters of the good words.*"⁷² St. Paul teaches us to "*reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition, knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned.*"⁷³

The first three centuries of Christian history were marked by the appearance of certain heresies or false teachings such as the adherence to the Old Testament laws,⁷⁴ the secret philosophic ideologies for the elite (Gnosticism),⁷⁵ the dazzling prophetic aberrations (Montanism),⁷⁶ the great errors regarding the three Persons

⁷² St. Irenaeus, *Heresies*, I, Introduction, 1, in Hadjephraimides, p. 43.

⁷³ Titus 3:10-11.

⁷⁴ Acts 15:1-35.

⁷⁵ Trempelas, *Encyclopaedia*, p. 7. Cf. Stefanides, *Eccl. History*, pp. 52, 54.

⁷⁶ Trempelas, *Encyclopaedia*, p. 8. Cf. St. Epiphanius, *Hereses*, book II, v. I, XLVIII, 11, in Migne, *P.G.*, 41, 872. Didymus the Blind, *About the Holy Trinity*, book III, ch. 41, in Migne, *P.G.*, 39, 984-989.

of the Holy Trinity (Sabellianism) and the heresies concerning the Divinity of Jesus Christ and His Two Natures and Wills: Divine and Human (Arianism, Monophysitism,⁷⁷ Nestorianism and Monothelitism.)⁷⁸

In addition to the Apostolic Council of Jerusalem (49 A.D.)⁷⁹ and until the year 787 A.D., seven Ecumenical Councils as well as many other Local Councils of the One United and Undivided Church took place. They all dealt first and foremost with specific challenges to the Apostolic Teachings. During this period of Christian history, the entire Orthodox Church embraced, saved and defended the truths of the New Testament Apostolic Faith and Tradition from the destructive false teachings of all the heresies.

This one faith, the Apostolic Doctrine, preserved through all trials and tribulations, is known today as “***the Eastern Orthodox Christian Faith.***” Consequently, the Eastern Orthodox Church is the original and pure New Testament Church, which has preserved all the Apostolic Teachings, way of life and worship undefiled from the time of the Lord Jesus Christ and His holy Apostles to this very day. And thus it is the duty of all who truly desire to know and follow Christ to be living members of this very Church.

To be an Orthodox Christian is the most honourable commitment anyone can assume in this life

⁷⁷ Trempelas, *Encyclopaedia*, pp. 32-33. Cf. Stefanides, *Eccl. History*, p. 200.

⁷⁸ Trempelas, *Encyclopaedia*, pp. 33-36. Cf. St. John of Damascus, *Catechesis*, III, 15 and 18, in Migne, *P.G.*, 94, 1040, 1073, 1076. Mansi, XI, 373, 597.

⁷⁹ Acts 15:1-35.

because a true and active Orthodox Christian is the carrier of Christ's Name, an imitator of God, a vessel of God's Grace, and a temple of the Holy Spirit. To be an Orthodox Christian means that one has renounced oneself, taken up one's cross and followed Christ by applying His Teachings to daily life. An Orthodox Christian is nothing more than a living Gospel and the manifestation of the Life of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Son of God, in this world. An Orthodox Christian is the fulfillment of God's Commandment to man to "*be holy, for I Am Holy*"⁸⁰ and "*you are gods and all of you are children of the Most High.*"⁸¹

⁸⁰ Lev. 11:44, 45; 19:2; 20:7. 1 Peter 1:16.

⁸¹ Psalm 81(82):6. John 10:34-35.