

PART FIVE

THE ORTHODOX CHURCH

AS THE KINGDOM OF GOD ON EARTH

CHAPTER ONE

MEANING, DIVINE INSTITUTION AND THE NECESSITY OF THE CHURCH

An authentic definition of the word “Church,” is sought from its etymology, and especially from its biblical characteristics found in many parts of Holy Scripture, as well as in the Teachings of the Holy Fathers of the Orthodox Church. Etymologically “Church” means the gathering of the people by the leaders. In Holy Scripture the term refers to the people of Israel being a Communion under God or the gathering of the people to worship God. Finally, in the New Testament the word is used to describe the gathering of those who believe in Christ, or those who gather in a private home to worship or to teach one another. It also refers to the total number of faithful in a city or province, or of the whole world, the local churches of which the Church of God consists and which our Lord “purchased with His own Blood.”¹ According to the Teachings of Holy Scripture to which the Holy Fathers also agree, the Church is the Communion of the faithful who are united through Christ to one another and to God.

In the New Testament it is characterized as the Kingdom of God on earth as well as being His House and His Holy Temple. In addition, the Church is regarded as a pure virgin united to one Husband, Christ, and being His Body. This Communion, being established by the Holy Spirit, through the true faith, hope and submission of its members to Christ into one united Communion, is distinguished as God-instituted and God-preserved from any other human community and which, by the descent of the Holy Spirit, was founded and is the Treasury of God’s Grace, “the pillar and ground of the Truth”² till the end of the ages.

The Church was founded by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Son of God, but had her prototype and forerunner in the God-governed Old Testament. And for this reason some Fathers characterize those who pleased God before the Coming of Christ as being members of His Church and co-heirs with those who believed and pleased Him. This Teaching is found in the New Testament and especially in the Epistle to the Hebrews. Nevertheless, the Church of the New Testament, as the Living Body of Christ, differs from the Synagogue of Israel.

Characterizing the Church as “God-provided,” we primarily mean that through the Calling of the Holy Spirit, all the members of the Church are Regenerated and increased, transmitted through death from earth to Eternal Life. Secondly, we mean the unity and incorporation of the whole Body, which is accomplished through the Holy Mysteries and the Grace, poured out from the One Head of the Church. It also means the building up, increasing and perfection of the whole Body and each individual member separately. Hence those faithful of whom the Church consists, are referred to as “Saints,” for they were Called by God, even though amongst them are ill members who are separated from the Church, but with the hope of their restoration. Those who stubbornly remain in their error and heresy, are separated from the Church, as well as the schismatic and those who follow a sinful life without repentance. All the rest, who have the same true faith, regardless of the period of time in which they lived, are incorporated either into the Heavenly Triumphant Church or are members of the Militant Church that continues her struggle on earth.

¹ Acts 20:28.

² 1 Tim. 3:15.

Obviously, the Militant Church, being organized, is distinguished by Elders and faithful, and has a visible and invisible aspect, being dependent on her invisible Head and receiving Life from the invisible Holy Spirit. Both aspects are equally distinctive, but not in conflict with one another. Thus we can define the Church as the Holy Body of Christ, which receives her Life from the Holy Spirit and consists of one God-instituted Community, having the same True Faith and through the participation of the Holy Mysteries, united into one Body, administered by the Clergy (Ordained by the laying on of hands by the Holy Apostles through unbreakable succession, known as the Apostolic Succession), in order to continue the Saving Work of the Lord, Who is her Head until the end of the ages.

Henceforth, it is obvious that the Orthodox Church is “the pillar and ground of the Truth,” which infallibly and securely transmits the Treasure of Divine Revelation. She is furthermore, the Treasury of Divine Grace, which gives all the Gifts poured forth from Christ’s Death on the Cross and His Resurrection. In addition to this, the Church is the Body of Christ that continues the Work of Salvation after His Ascension. The Church is the Divine Ark, in which everyone achieves Salvation. This was proclaimed by the Holy Fathers of the Orthodox Church and accordingly, there is no Salvation outside the original Church established by our Lord and Saviour. This, therefore, means that the only vehicle of Salvation is the Orthodox Church.

1. The Meaning of the Term “Church” According to its Etymology and Holy Scripture

The etymology of the word “*Ecclesia*” (“Church”)³ originates from the Greek verb “*εκκαλέω*” (“to call”). It was used by the Greeks before Christ to signify the gathering of the citizens by the rulers for a public discussion. Under this same meaning, we find the word in the Old Testament⁴ and in the New Testament,⁵ where the term is used in conjunction with the words: “the Lord’s,” “the Saints” or “the faithful.” In the Old Testament, however, it signifies the Israelites as the elect people of God who were Called for a special Mission and were ruled by God as a Community from which the pagans were excluded as well as some of the disabled.⁶ The word was especially used to signify the gathering of God’s people, as the “*Ecclesia*” (“the Church”) of the Saints or Faithful, either to glorify God or to worship Him inside or outside the Temple.⁷

In the New Testament the word “*Ecclesia*” signifies the gathering of the faithful: those who accepted and confessed the Christian Faith.⁸ It also signifies the gathering of the faithful to worship and the building up of their faith in private houses.⁹ It denotes all of the faithful of one city or province, (i.e. the *Ecclesia* (Church) of Jerusalem, the *Ecclesia* of Antioch, the *Ecclesia* of Ephesos, the *Ecclesia* of Corinth, the *Ecclesia* of Galatia, Judea, Asia, Macedonia, e.t.c.¹⁰). Most commonly, the word “*Ecclesia*” is used in the New Testament to indicate the

³ Cf. Kefalas, *Catechesis*, pp. 217-219. Frangopoulos, *Christian Faith*, pp. 175-178. Mitsopoulos, *Themata*, pp. 84, 228-229.

⁴ Psalm 25(26):5. Wisdom of Sirach 26:5.

⁵ Acts 19:32, 39 and 40.

⁶ Deut. 23:2-4, 9.

⁷ Psalms 88(89):6. 149(150):1. 21(22):23, 26. 39(40): 10. 106(107):32. I Macc. 3:10. Joel 2:16. Wisdom of Sirach 15:5; 44:15.

⁸ 1 Corinth. 4:17; 11:18. Cf. Damalas, *Catechesis*, pp. 56-60.

⁹ Rom. 16:5 and Col. 4:15. Cf. Mitsopoulos, *Themata*, pp. 229-230.

¹⁰ Acts 8:1; 13:1; 14:27; 15:3. 1 Corinth. 1:2; 16:19. 2 Corinth. 8:1. Rom. 16:1. Gal. 1:2, 22.

Church of God that is spread throughout the entire world and which is founded upon the True Faith and initiated by the Lord,¹¹ “which He purchased with His own Blood.”¹²

The universal Ecclesia (Church) is composed of the local “churches of God.”¹³ Christ is the Head of the Church,¹⁴ being the Saviour of the Body, for He “nourishes and cherishes”¹⁵ the faithful as being “members of His Body,”¹⁶ His Church, which is the “pillar and ground of the Truth”¹⁷ and which “the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a Holy Temple in the Lord.”¹⁸

*“The Mystery of the Church exists before history. The pre-existence of the Church within the Wisdom of God underlines her post-historical nature. The Church does not derive from history, but enters within the world. It is the progressive manifestation of the hidden Mystery, which leads towards the fulfillment of all in all.”*¹⁹

Synonymous terms of the word “Ecclesia” are used in the New Testament, such as “the Kingdom of God” and “the Heavenly Kingdom,” by which the Ecclesia of God is characterized as being from Heaven and where her members find their Justification, Perfection, Sanctification, Salvation and Glorification in Christ. Through the Church, within the Church and for the Church, man is united through Christ. He is Regenerated within Christ and he lives for Christ achieving his “Theosis” (Deification). In addition, the term “Kingdom” signifies the Community in which the Lord is the supreme Ruler and King to whom all the faithful submit themselves. St. John the Forerunner and Baptist presents this Kingdom as being “at hand”²⁰ while the Lord refers to it as being already established upon the earth “and the violent take it by force,”²¹ or as the future to come “in power” before His Apostles die, or as an inheritance that the Father was well pleased “to give” to “the little flock”²² and which is bestowed by the Father to His Son and thereafter, at the last moments, by the Son to His Holy Apostles and Disciples.²³

The “Ecclesia” (Church) is also called “the House of God,”²⁴ which is built “on the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets”²⁵ “into a Holy Temple in the Lord”²⁶ by the “living stones” of the faithful, “to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ,”²⁷ so “that Christ may dwell” in the “hearts through faith.”²⁸ It is referred to as “a chaste virgin” presented to Christ²⁹ Who loves her “and gave Himself for her, that He might

¹¹ Matth. 16:18.

¹² Acts 20:28.

¹³ 1 Corinth. 11:16.

¹⁴ Ephes. 5:23. Cf. Mitsopoulos, *Themata*, pp. 234-236.

¹⁵ Ephes. 5:29.

¹⁶ Ephes. 5:30

¹⁷ 1 Tim. 3:15.

¹⁸ Ephes. 2:21.

¹⁹ Cf. Ephes. 1:23.

²⁰ Matth. 3:2. Cf. Daniel 2:44.

²¹ Matth. 11:12.

²² Luke 12:32.

²³ Luke 22:29.

²⁴ Heb. 10:21.

²⁵ Ephes. 2:20.

²⁶ Ephes. 2:21.

²⁷ 1 Peter 2:5.

²⁸ Ephes. 3:17. Cf. Kefalas, *Catechesis*, p. 24.

²⁹ 2 Corinth. 11:2.

*Sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the Word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be Holy and without blemish.*³⁰

The “*Ecclesia*” being characterized as “*the Body of Christ*,”³¹ reveals the close relationship of Christ with the faithful, of whom the Church consists. St. John Chrysostom observed: “*Can anything be a head without a body?*” “*Where the head is, there is the body; for if not, it would not be a body, neither a head.*”³²

The term “*Bride of Christ*”³³ manifests the unmixed and independence of each member and although the Church consists of the faithful who are closely united with the Bridegroom, they are distinguished from Him. Each individual soul has Christ as its Bridegroom and is not absorbed by the Church. Although all are one, united to one another and to Christ as the Head and Bridegroom, the personality of each individual is preserved.³⁴

2. The Meaning of the Term “*Ecclesia*” According to the Holy Fathers

St. Clement of Rome addressed his epistles on behalf of “*the Church of God which sojourns in Rome to the Church of God which sojourns in Corinth*,”³⁵ which were characterized as the “*ancient Church of the Corinthians*”³⁶ “*who are Called and Sanctified by the Will of God through Lord Jesus Christ.*”³⁷

St. Ignatius the Theophoros of Antioch addressed the local communities of the faithful in Ephesos, Magnesia, Tralles, Rome, Philadelphia and Smyrna as “*Churches*” and he described them variously as being “*predestined before the ages for lasting and unchangeable glory*,”³⁸ as having “*been blessed through the Grace of God the Father*,”³⁹ as “*dearly loved by God*,”⁴⁰ as having “*found mercy in the Majesty of the Father Most High*,” as “*beloved and enlightened through the Will*” of God,⁴¹ as having “*found mercy and is firmly established in godly harmony and unwaveringly rejoices in the Suffering of our Lord, fully convinced of His Resurrection in all Mercy*”⁴² and as having been “*endowed with every spiritual Gift, filled with faith and love, not lacking in any spiritual Gift, most worthy of God.*”⁴³

It is furthermore emphasized that all who believe are “*members of one another*” and thus rebellions and divisions in the Church are not allowed to “*split the members of Christ and to rebel against our own body.*”⁴⁴

³⁰ Ephes. 5:25-27.

³¹ Rom. 12:5. 1 Corinth. 6:15. Ephes. 1:22-23; 5:30. Col. 1:18, 24. Evdokimov, *Orthodoxia*, pp. 193-195.

³² St. John Chrysostom, *To 1 Corinthians*, Homily 8, § 4, in Migne, *P.G.*, 61, 72. Ibid, *To Ephesians*, Homily 3, § 2, in Migne, *P.G.*, 62, 26

³³ John 3:29. Rev. 21:2, 9; 22:17.

³⁴ Mouratides, *The essence*, p. 107.

³⁵ St. Clement of Rome, *1st Corinthians*, Introduction, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 28.

³⁶ Ibid, *1st Corinthians*, 47, 6, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 55.

³⁷ Ibid, *1st Corinthians*, Introduction, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 28.

³⁸ St. Ignatius, *To Ephesians*, Introduction, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 86.

³⁹ Ibid, *To Magnesians*, Introduction, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 93.

⁴⁰ Ibid, *To Trallians*, Introduction, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 97.

⁴¹ Ibid, *To Romans*, Introduction, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 101.

⁴² Ibid, *To Philadelphians*, Introduction, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 106.

⁴³ Ibid, *To Smyrnaeans*, Introduction, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 110.

⁴⁴ St. Clement of Rome, *1st Corinthians*, in *B*, v. 1, pp. 31, 46 and 7.

This unity of the Church as one Body is stressed by St. Irenaeus, who observed that “the Church, *although spread throughout the whole world to the edges of the earth,*” has one faith “*which she received from the Apostles and their disciples.*” She “*preserves this*” “*as living in one house, as having one soul and heart, and as having one mouth.*” And St. Irenaeus acknowledged that “*the dialects of the world*” are different tongues, through which the Word is preached” but he stressed that “*neither those churches in Germany,*” nor those in Iberia, “*nor in the east, nor in Egypt, nor in Libya, nor those that were established in the midst of the world*” believe or preach differently. But, as the sun is “*one and the same*” for the whole world, likewise the Word of the Truth that is preached by the one Church shines upon and Enlightens all men who want “*to come to the Knowledge of the Truth.*”⁴⁵

St. John Chrysostom observed that “*the faithful around the world and those who are and those who will be, are one body*” “*and this one body is composed of the many members and is in the many*” in such a way that the local Church “*is part of the all-present Church and the body which consists of the Churches*”⁴⁶ and “*people, are all those who hope in Christ and one Church, are those of Christ, although they are from different places*” according to the assurance of St. Basil the Great.⁴⁷

St. Augustine characterizes the Church as being a Communion of men, gathered together from all nations in one flock, in the hearts of which God rules, and as His Kingdom founded upon the earth but perfected in Heaven. He calls her “*the City of God*” in which her members, who have passed away and who will be born, are moving ahead through time, and are identified as being in the Kingdom of Heaven.⁴⁸ He also proclaims that the Temple of God is the Holy Church, which is Catholic, in Heaven and on earth.⁴⁹ Elsewhere he teaches that the Church is all the people of God, from Abel to those who will be born in the last days and who will believe in Christ.

St. Epiphanius observed that this Communion is composed by the Holy Spirit through the members who are born in her and that “*the Church is born of one faith, born through the Holy Spirit.*”⁵⁰

St. John Chrysostom asks: “*How can the bride be His daughter? How can the daughter be His bride?*” He noted that according to the flesh this cannot be, for the bride is different to the daughter, but, he adds, “*for God both are one.*” Consequently the Church is simultaneously daughter and bride of Christ, for “*He Regenerated her through Baptism, and He united her.*” In addition, “*... the Lord and Master and Father wanted to become her Bridegroom.*” This birth of the Church is compared to the origin of Eve as follows: “*As the woman was made from the part of Adam received from his bones and his flesh, likewise we are members of the Master’s Body, made from His Flesh and from His Bones.*” Elsewhere he observed that “*as Eve was made from the side of Adam, likewise are we from the Side of Christ.*” Clarifying this opinion, he adds that when Christ died on the Cross, “*one of the*

⁴⁵ St. Irenaeus, *Heresies*, book I, ch. 10, §§ 1, 2, in Migne, *P.G.*, 7, 552, 553. Cf. *Ibid*, in Hadjephraimides, pp. 64-65.

⁴⁶ St. John Chrysostom, *To Ephesians*, Homily 10, § 1, in Montfaucon, v. 9, p. 86. *Ibid*, *To 1 Corinthians*, Homily 32, § 1, in Migne, *P.G.*, 61, 264.

⁴⁷ St. Basil, the Great, *Epistle* 161, in Migne, *P.G.*, 32, 629.

⁴⁸ St. Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, XVII, c. 1, in Migne, *P.L.*, 41, 523.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, *Enchiridion*, 56, in Migne, *P.L.*, 40, 259.

⁵⁰ St. Epiphanius, in Migne, 42, 781.

soldiers came and pierced His Side with a spear, and immediately Blood and Water came out.⁵¹ And from that Blood and Water the whole Church was born.” For all those faithful of whom the Church consists, “are born through the Water of Baptism and are nourished through His Blood.” And as from Adam when he was asleep, “the woman was made; likewise when Christ died, the Church was formed from His Side.”⁵²

Describing the moral qualifications of the Church as the Bride of Christ, he observes the Truth of Him finding her to be “unclean and unformed and worthless, with spot, enslaved, naked, dragged in blood”⁵³ before Baptism but “He washes her from her uncleanness” and He “not only decorated her, but He made her glorious⁵⁴” in Baptism. Thus “He presented the Church to Himself, not having spot or wrinkle,⁵⁵” as a “chaste virgin”⁵⁶ He “called her a bride,” “being a chaste virgin through the Doctrines and true morals.” And with this new and strange phenomenon it was noted that although “in the world the virgins remain before the wedding, after the wedding they are not anymore, but here” those who are incorporated in the Church, “even if they are not virgins before this Wedding, after this Wedding, they become virgins” through this Spiritual Rebirth. “For all the births from a father and a mother have the rebirth externally, but are Buried with Christ⁵⁷ in an unspeakable way.”⁵⁸ “The Church being a harlot, became a virgin.”⁵⁹

Theodoros of Mopsuestias adds that we are Buried with Christ “in Baptism and we are raised together with Him⁶⁰ and we eat His Body and we drink His Blood.”⁶¹

3. Community God-instituted Foretold by the Old Testament

According to Holy Scripture and the Teachings of the Holy Fathers of the Orthodox Church, the Ecclesia appears to us to be a community of men who are united to one another through True Faith and Hope according to the Calling of God by the Holy Spirit.⁶² It is not a social unity and a living together. It is a Divine Institute, which is the result of the supernatural Saving Action of the Holy Spirit. Surpassing the boundaries of the natural life of man, the Church opposes the society of evil men or the kingdom of darkness and the power of “the ruler of this age.” It is distinguished clearly from other communities (marriage, family, state, tribe, e.t.c.), of which she does not doubt their rights and authority, seeking only to Sanctify them, being superior to them and as a matter of Faith consisting of the new Creation in Christ.

⁵¹ Cf. John 19:34.

⁵² St. John Chrysostom, *Praise to Maximus*, § 3, in Migne, *P.G.*, 55, 200. Ibid, Migne, *P.G.*, 51, 229.

⁵³ Ibid, *To Psalm 5*, § 2, in Migne, *P.G.*, 55, 63.

⁵⁴ Cf. Ephes. 5:26.

⁵⁵ Cf. Ephes. 5:27.

⁵⁶ 2 Corinth. 11:2.

⁵⁷ Cf. Rom. 6:4. Col. 2:12.

⁵⁸ Origen, *Fragment 45, to John*, in *B*, v. 12, p. 363. St. John Chrysostom, *To 2 Corinthians*, Homily 23, § 1, in Montfaucon, v. 10, p. 704. Theodoretus, *To Ephesians 5:30*, in Migne, *P.G.*, 66, 920. Kritopoulos, ch. VII, in Karneris, *The dogmatics*, v. II, p. 528.

⁵⁹ St. John Chrysostom, *When Eutropius was found out of the Church*, §§ 6-7, in Migne, *P.G.*, 52, 402.

⁶⁰ Cf. Eph. 2:6. Col. 2:12; 3:1.

⁶¹ Theodoretus of Cyrus, *To Ephesians 5:30*, in Migne, *P.G.*, 66, 920.

⁶² Cf. Evdokimov, *Orthodoxia*, pp. 171-172.

The day of the birth of the Church can be said to be the Day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit descended upon the Holy Apostles and the first Disciples as the other “Helper,”⁶³ “the Holy Spirit Whom the Father will send”⁶⁴ and Who “may abide with you forever,”⁶⁵ thus proving that the Church is the Teacher of the Truth and Treasury of Divine Grace.

The first appearance of the Church was in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, when, through His first preaching, He spoke of the coming of “the Kingdom of Heaven,”⁶⁶ which was to be established on earth through His Church. Consequently the first disciples were gathered around Him and were then taught by Him so that they would be not only the first foundation stones of His Church but also the successors to His Work, continuing the spreading and establishing of the Divine Structure of God: the Ecclesia. In His prayer to His Father, Christ our Lord witnesses that they were given to Him by God the Father⁶⁷ and He preserved them so that “none of them were lost, except the son of perdition.”⁶⁸ And although for a moment the Shepherd was stricken and the sheep were scattered,⁶⁹ they were gathered once again in His Name and tarried “in the city of Jerusalem until they were endued with the Power from on High.”⁷⁰

Thus, the Ecclesia being seen in the light of history, appears as the Fruit of Christ’s Appearance and, simultaneously, the undoubtable proof of His Work throughout the centuries, which He continues through His Disciples. Without any argument, Jesus Christ is not only the Lord of the Church Who owns her having bought her, He is also her Founder, having foretold of the Rock of True Faith upon which He would build His Church and against which “the gates of Hades shall not prevail.”⁷¹ For this reason He prayed to His Father “that all may be one,”⁷² those who would believe in Him and of whom His Church would consist, preserving “them from the evil one”⁷³ and making them all as “one.”⁷⁴ In addition, He gave them Laws and Commandments, according to which the Church is administered. He elected His successors to continue His Work and instituted the Holy Mysteries as a means of receiving the Saving Grace. Finally, He sent “the Holy Spirit Who proceeds from the Father”⁷⁵ and Who created the Birthday of the Church, giving Life to her members through the “rivers of Living Water,”⁷⁶ which inexhaustibly pour forth from her.

Thus, the Ecclesia appears as a God-established Institution and Community. Existing as a model in the Old Testament⁷⁷ and as forerunner of the God-ruled people of Israel, she appears to be from the beginning, proclaimed by the Prophets as a Kingdom, which “the God of the Heaven shall set up, which shall never be destroyed.” “It shall stand for ever”⁷⁸ and as “the House of God shall be on the top of the mountains, ... it shall be exalted above the hills;

⁶³ John 14:16.

⁶⁴ John 14:26.

⁶⁵ John 14:16.

⁶⁶ Matth. 4:17.

⁶⁷ John 17:6.

⁶⁸ John 17:12.

⁶⁹ Mark 14:27.

⁷⁰ Luke 24:49.

⁷¹ Matth. 16:18.

⁷² John 17:21.

⁷³ John 17:15.

⁷⁴ John 17:22.

⁷⁵ John 16:26.

⁷⁶ John 7:38.

⁷⁷ St. Cyril of Alexandria, *To Leviticus*, in Migne, P.G., 69, 552.

⁷⁸ Daniel 2:44.

and all nations shall come to it.”⁷⁹ The Church will “rejoice” when compared to the Old Testament Synagogue that was “barren” because, through the fulfillment of all the Prophecies and the Old Testament types of Jesus Christ her Founder, she will appear under a different form bearing Fruit, “for more are the children of the desolate than of her that has a husband.”⁸⁰

Hence, those “who pleased God before Christ’s Appearance,” are characterized by some of the Holy Fathers of the Orthodox Church as being one body with those after the period of the New Testament, for they also loved Christ. This one can understand from the fact that “Abraham rejoiced to see the day of Christ, and he saw it and was glad”⁸¹ while Moses wrote of Jesus, like the rest of the Prophets: “I will raise up to them a Prophet of their brethren, like you; and I will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them as I shall Command Him. And whatever man shall not hear whatsoever words that Prophet shall speak in My Name, I will take vengeance on him.”⁸² “For they did not write about Him Who they ignored; knowing Him they worshipped.” “They knew Him to be the Christ of God, although He served Isaac, spoke to Jacob, accepted to speak to Moses and the Prophets after him.”⁸³ Besides, if we the Christians are new and our name “is just known by all the nations” “but the way of life and upbringing” “achieved by the men of old,” and all those who “were witnessed for their justice, from Abraham to the first man,” were called “Christians, ... [it] would not fall away from the Truth.”⁸⁴ The Epistle to the Hebrews⁸⁵ numbers all those who “having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the Promise,” for “God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.”⁸⁶

We must never forget the essential differences between the Ecclesia of the New Testament (the Orthodox Church) and those of the Old Testament (the Synagogue). The Old Testament Church was aiming, as God-ruled, to achieve political goals, being mixed with civil authorities while the Church of the New Testament, which “is not of this world, but”⁸⁷ which is a Heavenly Kingdom⁸⁸ although it acts in the world, looks forward to supernatural Goals (the Deification of man) by the use of supernatural means (Holy Mysteries). Also the Church of the Old Testament was purely Judaic, in which the boundaries of religion and nationality were mixed, in contrast to the Catholicity (Universal nature) of the New Testament Church. In the Old Testament Church the members were incorporated by birth and origin, whereas in the New Testament Church of Christ, those who believe and are Baptised, are incorporated through Faith and Baptism, becoming the new Creation by the Operation of the Holy Spirit from Above. In the Judaic Church, inner cleanness and Sanctification were not achieved, as within the Orthodox Church of Christ, being the only Treasury of Divine Grace. The Judaic Church used symbols, types and shadowy pre-images of the future Reality and Truth, which is the Divine Revelation of Christ

⁷⁹ Is. 2:2.

⁸⁰ Is. 54:1.

⁸¹ John 8:56.

⁸² John 5:46. Cf. Deut. 18:15, 18.

⁸³ St. John Chrysostom, *To Ephesians*, Homily 10, § 1, in Migne, *P.G.*, 62, 75.

⁸⁴ Eusebius, *Church History*, I, 4, §§ 8 and 6, in Migne, *P.G.*, 20, 77, 80.

⁸⁵ Heb. 11:3-40.

⁸⁶ Heb. 11:39, 40. Cf. Origen, *In cant. canticorum*, § 2, in Migne, *P.G.*, 13, 134.

⁸⁷ John 18:36.

⁸⁸ Matth. 3:2; 5:3, 19, 20; 6:33; 7:21; 10:7; 11:11, 12; 13:11, 24, 31, 44, 47; 16:19; 18:1, 3, 4; 13:12; 20:1; 22:2; 23:13; 25:1.

within his Orthodox Church. Thus, **although** the Ecclesia of the Old Testament is **closely related** to the Ecclesia of the New Testament, **the two** differ **from** one another.

4. God-provided Community

The Orthodox Church is not only God-instituted, but also God-provided. Truly, in this God-instituted Community God is the **One Who Calls** “*into the Fellowship of His Son.*”⁸⁹ **He** “*chose for Himself*” those who will **be** the members of His Church. According to the assurance which He gave us that “*No one can come to Me unless the Father Who sent Me draws him,*”⁹⁰ only he who will be “*guided by Him, ... reaches*” Christ and “*... believes in Him and not just anybody.*”⁹¹ Thus, **regarding** St. Lydia, the seller of purple, “*the Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul.*”⁹² The new Creation and Spiritual Community consists of those who “*were Called into the Fellowship of the Son*”⁹³ by the Father, and **which** is **also** Fellowship with the Son of God, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, for through faith in Christ **and participation** in the Holy Mysteries, **we** become partakers of the **Sufferings, Life and Gifts** of Christ.

Thus, in Baptism those who are incorporated in the Church “*have been united together in the likeness of Christ*” and certainly they “*also shall be in the likeness of His Resurrection.*”⁹⁴ And as Christ was raised from the dead and became a new **Life**, likewise the faithful **enter a new** kind of **Life** after **Baptism**, by which “*the sin has been put to death, justice has been raised, and the old way of life has been vanquished, living this new Angelic Life.*”⁹⁵ According to this, Christ becomes the Head of those who through faith and the Holy Mysteries are in **Communion** with Him, and are united to Him as one Body. For He is, on the one hand the **centre** of **Life** from whom the new **Life** “*descends as Spiritual Power touching every member*” “*and the Spirit, being given to the members from the Head, acts from Above, being outpoured abundantly and touching all the members,*” **while** on the other hand, Christ is the **centre** of **Guidance** and **Ruling**, which holds **all the members** together.⁹⁶ And from this, one understand the words of St. Paul by which Christ is proclaimed **as** the “*Head of the Church*”⁹⁷ **Who** gives **accordingly** to each member **growth** within Him “*in love,*” for “*from Him the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.*”⁹⁸ As the **Centre** of unity, Christ is characterized as being “*the Cornerstone.*”⁹⁹ By this, Holy Scripture manifests that “*Christ is the One Who unites all*” in Him and **by Whom the structure** is upheld. “*And if you speak about the floor, and if you*

⁸⁹ 1 Corinth. 1:9.

⁹⁰ John 6:44.

⁹¹ St. John Chrysostom, *To Ephesians*, Homily 2, § 1, in Migne, *P.G.*, 62, 17. Zigabinos, *To John 6:37*, in Migne, *P.G.*, 129, 1248.

⁹² Acts 16:14.

⁹³ 1 Corinth. 1:9.

⁹⁴ Rom. 6:5.

⁹⁵ St. Photius, in Migne, *P.G.*, 118, 432. Diodorus, in Catenae Cramer. St. John Chrysostom, *To Romans*, Homily 10, § 4, in Migne, *P.G.*, 60, 480. Theodorus Mopsuestias, in Migne, *P.G.*, 66, 800.

⁹⁶ St. Ecumenius, *To Ephesians 4:16*, in Migne, *P.G.*, 118, 1221. St. John Chrysostom, *To Ephesians*, Homily 11, § 3, in Migne, *P.G.*, 62, 84. St. Gregory of Nyssa, *About perfection*, § 10, in Migne, *P.G.*, 46, 273.

⁹⁷ Ephes. 5:23.

⁹⁸ Ephes. 4:15-16.

⁹⁹ Ephes. 2:20. 1 Peter 2:6.

speaking about the walls, and if speaking about whatever else, He is the **One Who** upholds everything.”¹⁰⁰

This newness of **Life** is granted to the members of the Church “from God through Christ in the Holy Spirit” and “the Holy Spirit is the **One Who** makes us one body and **Regenerates** us.” “The Grace of the Holy Spirit is **that** which unites us **to** those who are far away, making known the beloved ones, not because of the characteristics of the body, but of the attributes of the soul.”¹⁰¹ Hence, St. John Chrysostom proclaims, “if the Spirit was not present, the Church would not exist; if the Church exists, it is obvious, that the Spirit is present.” “Before the Cross the Spirit **was** not given, because the world was in sin and there was no reconciliation” but immediately after the Lord’s Ascension, the Spirit was sent, **Who** is the Life-giving Power and Soul of the Church **as well as** the Creator of the **Relationship** within her. Thus, a greater **Relationship than that of the flesh** is created, by which the different nations become one Body, **united** “into one Christ being joined by the Spirit.” “The elder and the youth, the poor and the rich, the child and the young man, the woman and the man, and all become one soul and if one body, they are one. For this relationship is greater than the other and **the union more** accurate.”¹⁰²

5. The “**Called to be Saints**” Composes the Church

From the above it is made clear why those faithful **of whom** the Church **consists**, are **according to** St. Paul, “called to be **Saints**.”¹⁰³ They are **Saints** because of their **Calling** by God, **and** by which they were separated from the rest of the people. **Having** received the **Communion** of the Holy Spirit, they were dedicated to God. **Others, too**, are called “**Saints** by **Faith and Life**” or “by **Faith alone**, as dedicated to God only by **Faith**.”¹⁰⁴

Obviously there are also sinners within the Church, **because** our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Son of God, **compared** the Kingdom of **Heaven to** the **Parable** of the Dragnet¹⁰⁵ **that** was “cast into the sea and gathered some of every kind,”¹⁰⁶ **in order to expose the various human intentions and differences.**¹⁰⁷ Hence St. John Chrysostom observed that St. Paul called us “**Saints and spotless before Him**,” distinguishing between the holy and spotless in order to teach that “**the Saint is he who participates in the faith, spotless is he who leads a clean life.**”¹⁰⁸ Likewise Origen correctly **perceived** that “**many of the sinners relate to Jesus as their Lord and in them there is the Holy Spirit.**”¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁰ St. John Chrysostom, *To Ephesians*, Homily 6, § 1, in Migne, *P.G.*, 62, 44.

¹⁰¹ St. Basil the Great, *Against Eunomius*, book III, 4, in Migne, *P.G.*, 29, 664. St. John Chrysostom, *To 1 Corinthians*, Homily 30, § 1, in Migne, *P.G.*, 61, 650. St. Basil the Great, *Epistle* 133, in Migne, *P.G.*, 32, 569.

¹⁰² St. John Chrysostom, *To the holy Pentecost*, Homily 1, § 4, in Migne, *P.G.*, 50, 457, 458, 459, 463. *Ibid*, *To Ephesians*, Homily 9, § 3; Homily 1, § 4 in Migne, *P.G.*, 62, 72 and 15.

¹⁰³ Rom. 1:7. 1 Corinth. 1:2, 24.

¹⁰⁴ Zigabinos, *To John 6:37*, in Migne, *P.G.*, 129, 1248. Kalogeras, *Maria*, I, p. 9.

¹⁰⁵ Matth. 13:47-50.

¹⁰⁶ Matth. 13:47.

¹⁰⁷ Origen, in **B**, v. 13, p. 21.

¹⁰⁸ St. John Chrysostom, *To John 28:13*, in Migne, *P.G.*, 14, 712.

¹⁰⁹ Origen, in Trempeles, *Dogmatique*, v. II, p.329.

The Holy Fathers of the West and the ecclesiastic writers of an earlier era, stressed that our faith and love must not be scandalized. Should we see weeds in the Church we must neither justify ourselves or distance ourselves from the Church.¹¹⁰

St. Hieronymos observed that just as in Noah's Ark there were gathered together all the different species of creatures, likewise the Church gathers together all kinds of humanity: Saints and sinners.¹¹¹

St. Augustine adds that, "if the Ark was a symbol of the Church, it appears immediately as by the necessity, to have in the Church in the midst of the cataclysm of this time, animals of both species, the raven and the dove. Who are the ravens? They are those, who seek here the things for themselves. And the doves? They are those, who seek the things for themselves in Jesus Christ... In the Church they are good and evil."¹¹²

It is the general belief of all Churches that in the Community of Saints, there are also unworthy Priests who act for the benefit of the members of Christ, since through them the Holy Mysteries are celebrated and the faithful are Sanctified. Likewise, sinful preachers can use the Word of God to draw new members. Although the Scribes and Pharisees "were corrupted," our Lord did "...not remove them from their honour," "but gave them the authority, although evil," urging the Jews "to observe and to do" "whatever they tell to observe, that they should observe and do."¹¹³

6. The Cutting Off From the Church of the Incurable Members

Although the Church, as the Body of Christ, is the extreme expression of God's Love for man, there are some limits that, when exceeded, cause a sinner to be cut off from the Community of the Church, alienating himself from the Life and Salvation, which is poured forth from her. Thus, the rebellious and the defectors, who through their own renouncement, "have trampled the Son of God underfoot, countered the Blood of the Covenant," the Blood of Christ, by which they were "Sanctified," considering it "a common thing" and thus insulting "the Spirit of Grace,"¹¹⁴ which secures Salvation within the Church, outside of which there is no Salvation. They alienate themselves from Christ, His Community, the Church and as a result, break all connection with her.

On the other hand, the heretics who misinterpret the Doctrines of Christ and His Holy Apostles, although they may Teach from the True Gospel, are "anathema" ("accursed") and separated from our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Son of God. For St. Paul teaches: "even if we, or an Angel from Heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed."¹¹⁵ St. John the Apostle, Evangelist and Theologian, forbade receiving anyone who comes "and

¹¹⁰ St. Cyprian, *Epistola ad Maximum*, § 3, in Migne, *P.L.*, 4, 353.

¹¹¹ St. Hieronymus, in Trempelas, *Dogmatique*, v. II, p.330.

¹¹² St. Augustine, in Makarios, *Enchiridion*, v. II, p. 232.

¹¹³ Matth. 23:3. St. John Chrysostom, *To Matthew 23:2*, in Migne, *P.G.*, 28, 667. Cf. Karmeris, *The dogmatics*, v. II, pp. 755, 527, 566, 579 and 633.

¹¹⁴ Heb. 10:29. Zigabinos, *To John 6:37*, in Migne, *P.G.*, 129, 1248. Kalogeras, *Maria*, II, p. 422.

¹¹⁵ Gal. 1:8-9.

does not bring” with them the True Doctrines. They must not be received in homes nor even greeted.¹¹⁶ And St. Paul actually commanded us, to “reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition, knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned.”¹¹⁷

The heretics, according to their error of faith and egoistic insistence on their false teachings, alienate themselves from “the Life-giving Root, the Faith in Christ, and becoming dry, they are cast out. For, if we do not stay firm upon the foundation of the Apostles, we are like not having any foundation and will collapse.”¹¹⁸ Their plight could be like that which had threatened the Galatians who, wanting to return to circumcision, almost became “estranged from Christ” by attempting “to be Justified by Law” which would have caused them to have “fallen from Grace.”¹¹⁹

It is not strange then, when St. Justin the Philosopher and Martyr, bearing in mind the heresies of his time, especially “those who call themselves Marcians, Valentians, Vasilidians and Saturnilians” and those “who call themselves Christians, but in reality they are atheists and ungodly heretics,” recommended not considering them as Christians because “we do not have Communion with any of them.”¹²⁰

Tertullian assured us that “whoever are heretics, they cannot be Christians.”¹²¹

St. Ambrosios of Mediolan proclaimed that “he who does not confess all the Teachings of Christ, renounces Christ.”¹²²

St. Augustine, referring to those heretics “who call themselves Christians,” believed that in them “Christ is present only in Name; in Reality and Truth He is not amongst them.”¹²³

St. Gregory of Nyssa noted that since for all Faithful the Head is Christ, “he who is cut off from the Living Faith is headless, as Goliath was beheaded by his own sword, which he turned against the Truth, (the heretic cuts off himself) from the True Head.”¹²⁴

St. Athanasios the Great of Alexandria, denying the right of being entitled “Christians” to the heretics Arians, remarked that “from Christ we are called ‘Christians.’ Those who have the principal from elsewhere, which they believe as faith, have naturally their name, as being their property. And instead of being called ‘Christians’, they should be called ‘Arians,’ for this has the identity of their impiety.”¹²⁵

St. Basil the Great, considering the Eternal Condemnation of those “who instead of the name of the Christians, are called by the names of chief-heretics, [such] as Marcion or Valentinus or any of those who were careless,” guarantees that “the name of an ungodly

¹¹⁶ 2 John 10.

¹¹⁷ Tit. 3:10-11.

¹¹⁸ St. Basil, the Great, *To Isaiah*, ch. I, § 19, in Migne, P.G., 30, 149.

¹¹⁹ Gal. 5:4.

¹²⁰ St. Justin, the philosopher and martyr, *Dialogue*, ch. 35, §§ 5, 6 and 80, B, v. 3. pp. 239, 285.

¹²¹ Tertullian, *De Praescriptione haereticorum*, c. 37, in migne, P.L., 1, 61.

¹²² St. Ambrosius, *In Luc.*, lib. IV.

¹²³ St. Augustine, *Enchiridion*, ch. 5, in migne, P.L., 40, 233.

¹²⁴ St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Eunomius*, Homily 12, in Migne, P.G., 45, 912.

¹²⁵ St. Athanasius the Great, *Against Arians*, Homily I, § 2, in Migne, P.G., 26, 16.

cannot be written in the Book of Life, nor is counted among the Church of the firstborn, who are in Heaven.”¹²⁶

St. Cyril of Alexandria proclaimed “those who join together with the unholy heretics and participate in their ungodly sacrifices (prayers), *have multiplied* for themselves their sins, for they have sacrificed the lamb *outside the Holy and Divine yard*, which is the Church.”¹²⁷

The Holy Fathers place the schismatics *parallel* to the heretics. St. Basil the Great *excellently distinguishes* the difference *between heretics and schismatics by observing* that “heresies are those *that threw* away and changed the *Faith*; schisms are those which for ecclesiastical reasons and matters which are curable, divided themselves.”¹²⁸ Or according to St. Jeronimos, “the heresy consists of the changing of the *Doctrine*, whereas the schism divides him (the schismatic) from the Church because of estrangement to the *Bishop*.”¹²⁹

St. Ignatius the Theophoros of Antioch, *actually warns us*: “Do not be misled, my brothers: if anyone follows a schismatic, he will not inherit the Kingdom of God.”¹³⁰ If anyone holds to alien views, he disassociates himself from the Passion.”¹³¹

St. Irenaeus characterized the schismatics as “being empty from the *Love of God* and” *heading towards* “their own destruction,” not *interested in* “the unity of the Church” but because of insignificant reasons *that* they exaggerate, “they cut into pieces and divide the great and glorious *Body of Christ*” and *whatever is in their capacity*, “they destroy.” Proclaiming that God will Judge them, he *ascertained* that the damage caused by a schism is so great, *it is impossible for schismatics to attain* “even the slightest achievement” in order to correct the damage.¹³²

St. Cyprian, denying *that those who gather outside the Church, “are with Christ,”* does not hesitate to *declare* that “these, even if they are given up to death for the Name of Christ, cannot wash with their blood their sin (the schism which they caused).”¹³³

St. John Chrysostom seems *bear* in mind the above words when he refers to “a holy man [who] once *said*: “*neither the blood of Martyrdom can wipe away the sin*” of the schism. Characterizing this sin, he *added*, “he who falls in heresy is not less evil than he who divides the Church.” He *used* the example of one who slaughters a king *being liable for* all kinds of punishment. *Therefore, similarly*, he who “slaughters Christ and takes out members, what kind of punishment is he not worthy of?” *Neither does he* hesitate to proclaim that *even* those who preserve virginity among the heretics and schismatics, will not only *be unrewarded for their efforts*, “but they will be accounted for fornication (of faith).”¹³⁴

¹²⁶ St. Basil the Great, *To Psalm 48(49)*, § 7, in Migne, *P.G.*, 29, 448.

¹²⁷ St. Cyril of Alexandria, *To Hosea*, v. V, ch. 8, 12, in Migne, *P.G.*, 71, 209.

¹²⁸ St. Basil the Great, Canon I, in Trempeles, *Dogmatique*, v. II, p.333.

¹²⁹ St. Jeronimus, *In cap. III, Epistola ad Titum*, in migne, *P.L.*, 26, 633.

¹³⁰ Cf. 1 Corinth. 6:9.

¹³¹ St. Ignatius, *To Philadelphians*, 3, 3, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 107.

¹³² St. Irenaeus, *Heresies*, book IV, ch. 33, § 7, in Migne, *P.G.*, 7, 1076. Cf. *Ibid*, in Hadjephraimides, p. 332.

¹³³ St. Cyprian, *De unitate Ecclesiam*, § 14, in migne, *P.L.*, 4, 526.

¹³⁴ St. John Chrysostom, *To Ephesians*, Homily 11, § 5, in Migne, *P.G.*, 62, 87. *Ibid*, *To Philippians*, Homily 2, § 3, *P.G.*, 62, 194.

Finally, one falls into the **division** of the ecclesiastic body “when he dares to perform unworthily to that body.” When someone falls into **disgraceful offence** and, regardless of public scandal, **does not express any repentance**, it is advisable that those who alienate themselves from the Christian way of **Life**, should be cut off from the Church. **On one hand this is** for pedagogic reasons, whereas on the other hand, **it is** in order **for a small amount of yeast not to harm** the whole dough.

7. Members of the Church are **All the Saints of All Times**

Coming back to those **Saints** who were **Called by Divine** Grace, we observe that they are not restricted to a specific time period or generation. They are primarily “*fellow citizens with the Saints.*”¹³⁵ The Apostle uses the word “*Saints*” meaning “*not only those who through Grace, but those who [were] in the Law and before the Law. He also refers to “those around Abraham and those around Moses and those around Samuel.*”¹³⁶ The members of the Church are “*all those faithful who were and are and will be,*” not only those who live, **but those** who lived in the **past** and “*those before the Coming of Christ [who] pleased God*” and who, with all those in any generation, believed in Christ and placed their hopes on Him. “*They are one body, for they also loved Christ.*”¹³⁷ This is obvious **when** the Lord said: “*Abraham rejoiced to see My day; and he saw it and was glad*”¹³⁸ and that Moses “*wrote about Me.*”¹³⁹

The Church Militant consists of those members who are alive and who are called to “*endure hardship as good soldiers of Jesus Christ,*”¹⁴⁰ and to “*run with endurance the race that is set before them, looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith,*”¹⁴¹ not forgetting that “*this Life is a struggle; a struggle against the sins and the desires and the thoughts which fight one another in us.*”¹⁴² The Church **Triumphant in Heaven consists of** those who have passed away, **being** part of the same Church **and having come** from the Church **Militant, which is mostly visible.**

Thus, the Orthodox Church **is a matter of pure and undefiled Faith (Orthodoxia)**, not only according to her nature and her invisible Head, **but including** the **Life-giving Divine Principal**. Each member of the Orthodox Church on earth must consider himself a member of the New Testament Church, which is the only Christian Body **that has kept the Doctrines of Christ undefiled** till this day. These members are also **part** of the **Heavenly and Triumphant Church as well as** “*fellow citizens with the Saints,*”¹⁴³ the Patriarchs, the Prophets, the Apostles, the Teachers, the Hierarchs, the Martyrs, the Ascetics, and all the Just who, through their lives, pleased God throughout all generations.

¹³⁵ Eph. 2:19. Cf. Mitsopoulos, *Themata*, pp. 239-241.

¹³⁶ Zigabinos, *To John 6:37*, in Migne, *P.G.*, 129, 1248. Kalogeras, *Maria*, II, p. 21.

¹³⁷ St. John Chrysostom, *To Ephesians*, Homily 10, § 1, in Migne, *P.G.*, 62, 75. Dositheus of Jerusalem, *Confession*, ch. 11, p. 35.

¹³⁸ John 8:56.

¹³⁹ John 5:46.

¹⁴⁰ 2 Tim. 2:3.

¹⁴¹ Heb. 12:1-2.

¹⁴² St. Ecumenius, *To Hebrews*, in Migne, *P.G.*, 119, 424.

¹⁴³ Ephes. 2:19.

8. The Visible and Invisible Aspect of the Church

This Communion of the Faithful, the Church Militant, was distinguished by the Elders and faithful right from the beginning. Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Son of God, chose His Apostles and Disciples not only to comprise the first members of the Church around Him, but that “*as the Father has sent Him, He also sends them.*”¹⁴⁴ St. Paul declared: “*And He Himself gave some to be Apostles, some Prophets, some Evangelists, and some Pastors and Teachers, for the equipping of the Saints for the Work of Ministry, for the edifying of the Body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the Faith and of the Knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.*”¹⁴⁵

The Church as a visible institution was already presented by the Prophets using the analogy of the “*mountain.*” “*For in the last days the Mountain of the Lord shall be glorious, and the House of God shall be on the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall come to it. And many nations shall go and say, ‘Come, and let us go up to the Mountain of the Lord, and to the House of the God of Jacob; and He will tell us His Way, and we will walk in it.’*”¹⁴⁶ According to the Parables of the Lord, the Church is likened to a “*kingdom,*” “*flock,*” “*building,*” “*vine,*” etc. while St. Paul compared the Church to the human body. Obviously, all these images exalt the visible aspect of the Church.

Hence, St. Irenaeos compared the Church to the Seven Oil-Lamps, being visible and bringing the Light of Christ to all.

St. Augustine commented that “*the Church stands in the Light and is visible to all, for she is the city on the hill, which cannot be hidden.*”^{147,148}

It is obvious therefore, that the Elect and spotless of the faithful are united together Mystically and internally with Christ. They are born together and grow together with the tares, not in a special or separate field, according to the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares¹⁴⁹ and according to which our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Son of God, compared His Kingdom. They are the healthy members of the Mystical Body of the Church, not known by the world but by God, for “*the Lord knows those who are His.*”¹⁵⁰

The Saints do not comprise a special and invisible Church, but act within the visible Church, being detached from their old way of life and knowing Christ from within the Church. By means of the Holy Mysteries they receive Life and remain inseparable with her forever. In addition to this, these Elect and spotless, as long as they live here on earth, are visible members of the Church. The Mystical Communion with Christ and the other members is manifested visibly, as they come to personal Communion with one another, encouraging each other in the faith, nourished by the Divine Word of the Readings, hearing the Preaching, and generally displaying the Life of Christ through their own lives and actions within the Church. Nevertheless, they remain unknown to the world and even to the

¹⁴⁴ John 20:21.

¹⁴⁵ Ephes. 4:11-13.

¹⁴⁶ Is. 2:2-3.

¹⁴⁷ Cf. Matth. 5:14

¹⁴⁸ St. Augustine, *Contra Cresconium*, II, 36 and 45, in *migne, P.L.*, 43, 493.

¹⁴⁹ Matth. 13:24-30.

¹⁵⁰ 2 Tim. 2:19.

members of the Church. Only God, Who knows “*those who are His,*” knows **who and how many they are.**

We must never forget that the Church is not only visible, but also invisible. In the **visible aspect human** nature prevails **while the invisible aspect consists of** her Divine establishment and **Life.** In the inseparable union of the invisible and visible nature of the Church one can **observe** her God-Man nature **that reminds us of** the supernatural **Union** of the two **Natures - Divine and human -** in the one Person of Jesus Christ, **Who** is the unique God-Man, the invisible Head of the Church.

Consequently, no one can deny that within the Church there is the invisible **aspect that** gives **Life without which** she cannot exist, **nor can** her **humanity** receive **Life and reach Deification** (*Theosis*). This invisible Source is the Head of the Church, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and the **Divine Grace** which gives **Life** to her, **as well as** her invisible part **that** is in **Heaven.** And surely we look up to our Head in **Heaven** and **His** Life-giving Grace, **to His Eternal Plan of Salvation,** which existed **as** the invisible part of the Church in **Heaven** before **the creation of** this visible world.

Visible and invisible, **Divine and human nature** are **indivisibly** united in the Church, **just as the soul is united with its flesh, giving life to** the human body, whereas the separation of the soul brings death. The invisible or internal **aspect** of the Church is the **Mystical Body** of our Saviour, by which, although He is in **Heaven,** the Incarnation and His dwelling on earth **is extended,** continuing **His Work of Salvation amongst all human generations** through the Holy Spirit and outpouring **of** the Gifts from His Sacrifice on the Cross. The visible or external side of the Church is the **Community** of men who confess Jesus Christ **as** their Lord and Saviour, having His **Teachings that consist of** the **Divine Institution** as their life style, which the Lord made as the unique **Treasury of Grace** and infallible **Guardian, Interpreter and Teacher** of the Truth **revealed** by Him.

9. The Definition of the Church

According to the above, the definition of the Church must stress **both the** external and visible **as well as** the internal and invisible **aspects.** The Church is not simply a human institution, but **is Divine in origin.** Neither **is** she an unorganized society, **having** appointed administrators who, through the laying on of hands, continue the **Work of Salvation** of our Lord. As the Body of Christ she is governed by her **Divine Head** and receives **Life** from the **Life-giving Holy Spirit,** uniting within her those who believe and accept the **Truth, the newness of Life** in Christ and leading the whole world to **Salvation.**

*“The Church is the Body of Christ, she is the continuous Pentecost, she is the form of the Holy Trinity, the absolute Church of the three Divine Persons.”*¹⁵¹

“The Church is within the present world, but she is not of the present world. She is a Divine Community, the living from now of ‘the future age.’ For this reason the Life within the Church bears a completely new dimension and a new character, ‘repentance,’ the new valuation of the principals. The Mystery of the Church relies on being the ‘Church of those who repent and the Church of those who were lost,’ but simultaneously it is a Communion

¹⁵¹ Evdokimov, *Orthodoxia*, p. 165.

of Saints *and a Communion of sinners with the 'Holy,' deified participation with the only 'Holy One.'*"¹⁵²

Therefore we can define the Church as the Divine Community of all generations, from Adam till the end of this age, the God-called men who are united by the same True Faith and through the Communion of the same Divine Mysteries, under the one Head of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Incarnated Son and Word of God, in one moral Body, visible and invisible, who are administrated and ruled by Clergymen of Apostolic Succession established by the Lord, and continuing the Work of Salvation of our Lord, under the Guidance of the Holy Spirit, until His Second glorious Coming.¹⁵³

10. The Church as an Institution of Salvation

The Orthodox Church is not simply a Community of God-called Faithful who are Baptised, but also a God-established Institution of Salvation.¹⁵⁴ As the Institution of Salvation she transmits the Light of the Holy Gospel; she is the pillar and ground of the Truth remaining always indestructible and infallible; she pours the Gifts forth from the Cross to the world, being the Treasury of Divine Grace. Since the Church is the Mystical Body of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Son of God, He continues the Work of Salvation after His Ascension into Heaven through her in the entire world, uniting His Church and being in the midst of her "always, even to the end of the age."¹⁵⁵ It is natural to accept that the Church lives and seeks the same goals as her Founder.¹⁵⁶ This stems from the authority with which the Resurrected Lord authorized His Holy Apostles, sending them into the world as He was sent by His Father¹⁵⁷ and giving them the same Work, establishing them as His successors. He clearly stated that "he who hears you hears Me, he who rejects you rejects Me, and he who rejects Me rejects Him Who sent Me."¹⁵⁸ In addition to this, He gave them the Authority to forgive and bind sins¹⁵⁹ but to those who refuse to hear the Church, they must be regarded "like a heathen and a tax collector."¹⁶⁰ Even the Holy Apostles were conscious of their Mission, that they were "servants of Christ and stewards of the Mysteries of God,"¹⁶¹ "ambassadors for Christ,"¹⁶² "interceding as though pleading to God through them"¹⁶³ and calling all men to reconcile with Him.

It is obvious that, if the internal and external aspects of the Church are united together inseparably, the terms "Institution of Salvation" and "Community of Faithful in the Church" are identical. But, as the Head of the Church was first, before the Church, afterwards coming into existence and her Body being completed throughout the ages, likewise the whole Body of the Church is first the Institution of Salvation and then the Community of Faithful. As the Institution of Salvation, she precedes the Community that is founded, strengthened and

¹⁵² Evdokimov, *Orthodoxia*, p. 195.

¹⁵³ Trempelas, *Dogmatique*, v. II, p. 340.

¹⁵⁴ Cf. Damalas, *Catechesis*, p. 65. Dositheus, *Confession*, ch. 9, p. 32. Mitsopoulos, *Themata*, pp. 281-282.

¹⁵⁵ Matth. 28:20.

¹⁵⁶ Androutsos, *Symbolique*, p. 75. Karmeris, *Synopsis*, p. 79-80, 83.

¹⁵⁷ Cf. John 17:18, 20.

¹⁵⁸ Luke 10:16.

¹⁵⁹ Cf. Matth. 16:19; 18:18. John 20:23.

¹⁶⁰ Matth. 18:17.

¹⁶¹ 1 Corinth. 4:1.

¹⁶² 2 Corinth. 5:20.

¹⁶³ St. John Chrysostom, *To 2 Corinthians*, Homily 11, § 3, in Montfaucon, v. 10, p. 607.

spread through **Preaching** and the Holy Mysteries, which are the **Actions** of the Holy Spirit celebrated in the Orthodox Church and by her being the **Divine Institution**.

St. Ignatios the Theophoros of Antioch wrote: “Wherever the **Bishop** appears, there let the congregation be; just as wherever **Jesus Christ** is, there is the **Catholic Church**.”¹⁶⁴ Since the Orthodox Church is in reality Christ’s One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic **Church**, it is also equally true **that** wherever the Church is, there **too is Christ Jesus**.

It is obvious that the **God-given Authority** of the Church **is** because “*God gave to the Church Apostles, Prophets, Teachers and the Catholic Action of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, wherever the Church is, there the Spirit of God is and wherever the Spirit of God, there the Church and all the Grace. The Spirit is the Truth.*”¹⁶⁵ **Precisely** because the Holy Spirit dwells within the Church, **she** shows the only way to **Salvation** **since she** was entrusted **with** the **Light** and **Wisdom** of God, by which she saves all men.¹⁶⁶

Consequently, in order for man to **achieve Salvation** in Christ, he must belong to the **Canonical Church** **that** Jesus Christ established and which **maintains** the fullness of His **Truth** and the Apostolic Tradition undefiled throughout the centuries. This Church of the New Testament is only the Orthodox Church. All other Christian denominations have **alienated** themselves from the **Truth**, twisted the **Teachings** of the **Holy Gospel** to **fit their** own heretical teachings, and, by renouncing Apostolic Tradition, they restrict the **Divine Revelation** **only** to the written word of Holy Scripture. Thus, they cannot be the Church of the New Testament, but **rather** man-made institutions where there can be neither **Salvation** nor **Sanctification**, **as a result of being** alienated from the Truth.

St. Irenaeos literally **guaranteed that** no one partakes in the **Actions** of the Holy Spirit, **unless** they are in the Church and **they are nourished into Life** by the Church. Everyone **should** drink from the clear fountain which is **poured forth** from the **Body of Christ** **but** those who flee from this faith open for themselves **wells** of destruction from which they drink polluted water **of** the cesspool.¹⁶⁷

St. Cyprian categorically proclaimed that no one can have God the Father, if he does not have the Church as his mother¹⁶⁸. And as anyone could be saved from the cataclysm, without being in the Ark of Noah, even more now, none can be saved without being in the canonical Church. “*There is no other rather than the one house of the Lord and salvation is not possible for anyone elsewhere, but only within the Church*”¹⁶⁹. Everyone must realize, that “*outside of the Church there is no salvation*”¹⁷⁰.

Origen¹⁷¹ repeated the same principal. Parallel and St. Hieronymus, with different words expressed the opinion on the one hand, that “*anyone is saved, but he is saved within the Church*”, whereas on the other hand, that “*he who departs from the Church dies immediately from plague*”¹⁷².

¹⁶⁴ St. Ignatius, *To Smyrnaeans*, 8, 2, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 113.

¹⁶⁵ St. Irenaeus, *Heresies*, book III, ch. 24, § 1, in Migne, *P.G.*, 7, 966. Cf. Ibid, in Hadjephraimides, p. 258.

¹⁶⁶ St. Irenaeus, *Heresies*, book V, ch. 20, in Migne, *P.G.*, 7, 1177. Cf. Ibid, in Hadjephraimides, pp. 394-395.

¹⁶⁷ St. Irenaeus, *Heresies*, book III, ch. 24, § 1, in Migne, *P.G.*, 7, 966. Cf. Ibid, in Hadjephraimides, p. 258.

¹⁶⁸ St. Cyprian, *De catholic ecclesia unitate*, in migne, *P.L.*, 4, 519.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid, *Epist. 62 ad Pomponium*, § 4, in migne, *P.L.*, 4, 381.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid, *Epist. 73*, 21, in migne, *P.L.*, 3, 1169.

¹⁷¹ Origen, *In Jesu Nave, Homily III*, 5, in Migne, *P.G.*, 12, 842.

¹⁷² St. Hieronymus, *In Joel*, III, 1, in migne, *P.L.*, 25, 1028. Ibid, *In Ezech.*, VII, 15, in migne, 25, 72.

St. Augustine observes that outside of the Church anyone can have everything else, besides salvation. He can have honour, he can have mysterion, he can hold the gospel, he can have the faith to preach in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, but never can he achieve salvation, unless he is in the catholic Church¹⁷³.

Only in the all-wisdom of God, who knows the secrets of the hearts of all men and searches the minds and the souls, can find unspeakable to our knowledge ways to save a heretic or schismatic or anyone who is outside of the Church, but, who out of good will followed His commandments, as they were taught to them. But, again we cannot say anything more on this matter, for we have nothing in the Holy Scriptures and we cannot take up the responsibility to express any opinion concerning condemnation of others. God wants everyone to be saved and come to the knowledge of truth, but, if heresy and schism or unbelieving separates man from the true God, then, who are we to say what God should do or not to do? Everyone must consider being able to stand on that Day of Judgment before Christ and give an account of his deeds, whether good or evil. We must be active Orthodox Christians in all holiness giving the good example to the unbelievers to come to the true faith. In this God will be pleased with us.

¹⁷³ Ibid, *Sermo ad Caesarensis Ecclesiam Plebem*, § 6, in migne, *P.L.*, 43, 695.