

CHAPTER TWO

THE ATTRIBUTES OF THE CHURCH

The attributes of the Church are described in the Symbol of Faith, the Nicene Creed. We confess faith in One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. By the term “One” we proclaim the unity of the Church with her Head, our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and with the Holy Spirit Who is the Giver of Life: One Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ amongst all faithful and local Orthodox churches that constitute the One Undivided Eastern Orthodox Church. This unity, being supernatural and a moral Miracle, is expressed as unity of Faith, Worship and participation in the Holy and God-instituted Mysteries, as well as unity of the Ecclesiastic Community and administration. Thus the One, Undivided Eastern Orthodox Church is not simply an ideal. Rather, it is a real, living and visible Reality. The term “Holy” confesses the Church to be the inexhaustible Source of Holiness, which proceeds from her invisible Head and the Holy Spirit Who dwells within her. Consequently, it is impossible for her to be polluted by the impurities and sins of her members. This Holiness of the Orthodox Church is stressed by Holy Scripture, as well as by the Teachings of the Holy Fathers. The Church is acknowledged throughout all generations as being the Workshop and the Nourishment of the Saints and heroes of the Orthodox Christian Faith whom she Sanctifies and Deifies. The term “Catholic” confesses the Church’s destiny of spreading into the entire world and throughout all the centuries, yet remaining the same, being unchangeable till the end of this age. She is built upon the unshakeable Rock, Jesus Christ, Who remains with her forever. Finally, the term “Apostolic” confesses that the Orthodox Church is built upon the Teachings and Traditions of the Holy Apostles, which they received directly from Jesus Christ. Her persistence in what was conveyed by the Holy Apostles presents her as not deviating from the Truth, neither changing nor being alienated from the original Teachings of the Holy Gospel and Apostolic Tradition.

The Eastern Orthodox Church is the “Pillar and Ground of the Truth” proclaimed by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Son and Word of God. The Orthodox Church preaches the Good News throughout the centuries, from the Day of Pentecost when she began to function until this very moment. The Apostolic Teachings are inseparably united with the Apostolic Succession of Priesthood, which, through an unbreakable line of Ordination and the Laying on of the Hands by the Apostles, appoints men to continue the Work of Salvation of Christ throughout all times until His Second Glorious Coming. We must never forget that the Church is infallible in preserving and expressing Divine Truth.

1. The Church is One

The Eastern Orthodox Church is One because of her unity to her Head and to the Holy Spirit Who gives Life and unites her, as well as being One in the Faith and Hope of those members of whom she is composed in the unity of Peace and Love. These are inseparable and unique, One Moral Body, One Spiritual House, One Undivided Kingdom.¹

¹ Cf. Plato of Moscow, *Orthodox Teaching*, pp. 134-137. Evdokimov, *Orthodoxia*, pp. 175-179. Frangopoulos, *Christian Faith*, pp. 181-182. Mitsopoulos, *Themata*, pp. 246-248. Kefalas, *Catechesis*, p. 104.

St. Cyprian says that the Church is the people who gather together with their **Bishop as a flock** following their shepherd. Hence it is possible **for anyone** to know that the **Bishop is in the Church and the Church is wherever the Bishop² is.**

Kritopoulos observed that “*the Fathers called the Church ‘One’ for the One, and the simplicity of, Faith.*”³

Mogilas adds that “*as Christ is one and the same, so is His Bride one, as manifested in the Epistle to the Ephesians where it is said: ‘One Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, and one God and Father of all.*”^{4,5}

This unity of the Orthodox Church is stressed by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Son of God **Who** proclaimed, “*And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My Voice; and there will be one Flock and one Shepherd.*”⁶ He assures us that He is “*the True Vine*”⁷ with which every faithful is united inseparably as branches **that** receive **Life** from Him. In addition to **this**, He **beseches** the **Heavenly Father** in His prayer not only for His Apostles, “*but also for those who will believe in Him through their word; that they all may be one, as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee; that they also may be one in Us.*”⁸

St. Paul presents this unity of the Church by using three images. **Firstly**, by **referring to** the Church **as** the “*Body of Christ,*”⁹ he manifests the inseparable unity between the members to one another and to the Lord **Who is** the **Spiritual Head** of the Church. “*For as we have many members in one Body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one Body in Christ, and individually members of one another.*”¹⁰ Secondly, he **refers to** the Church **as a** “*chaste virgin*”¹¹ joined to Christ in one Body. “*For we are members of His Body, of His Flesh and of His Bones. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.*”¹² This is a great Mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the **Church.**”¹³ Finally, St. Paul **compares** the image of the Church **to** a “*building*” **that** has “*been built on the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets*”¹⁴ and of which Christ is the “*chief cornerstone*” “*in Whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a Holy Temple in the Lord.*”¹⁵ Hence he calls the Church “*the House of God*”¹⁶ and “*the Temple of God*”¹⁷ in which God dwells. St. Peter refers to Christ as being “*a Living Stone*” and the faithful as “*living stones*” **that** “*are being built up*” into “*a Spiritual House.*”¹⁸

² St. Cyprian, *Epist. 66 ad Popianum*, in Trempelas, v. II, p. 349.

³ Kritopoulos, in Karmeris, *The dogmatics*, v. II, p. 528.

⁴ Ephes. 4:5-6.

⁵ Mogilas, in Karmeris, *The dogmatics*, v. II, p. 629.

⁶ John 10:16.

⁷ John 15:1.

⁸ John 17:20-21.

⁹ Ephes. 1:22-23; 5:23. Col. 1:18; 2:19. 1 Corinth. 12:27.

¹⁰ Rom. 12:4-5.

¹¹ 2 Corinth. 11:2.

¹² Cf. Gen. 2:24.

¹³ Ephes. 5:30-32.

¹⁴ Ephes. 5:20.

¹⁵ Ephes. 5:20, 21.

¹⁶ 1 Tim. 3:15.

¹⁷ 1 Corinth. 3:16.

¹⁸ 1 Peter 2:4, 5.

This unity of the Orthodox Church,¹⁹ which presents her as being “*One*,” regardless of her numerous members and the various local churches, is her essential attribute that distinguishes her from all other religious communities. The Lord had precisely this Power in mind when praying to His Father “*that they all may be one in Us, that the world may believe that Thou sent Me.*”²⁰ In reality, the unity in One of the many is a Miracle that no man can perform. Only God can do so. Hence the Church is for the entire world even though she is separated in many places. She remains One for our Lord unites all the faithful. Thus the Church in a distant area is still part of the all-present Church and Body of Him Who unites all.²¹ As we mentioned before, the Lord is the one Head of the Body of the Church, whereas each individual is separate. He is the One Who gives Life and unites all the members, creating one God-bearing Organism, living harmoniously together and progressing with one Mind.

But the Holy Spirit Who Regenerates each faithful, is one and for this reason He was given to them, to unite their different ways.²² Additionally there is one Hope to which we have been Called and one God the Father of all Who Called us. There is also one Faith that unites in one way of thinking and in one Confession for all faithful as well as one Baptism that all members of Christ receive; one Bread of Eucharist, by which everyone is nourished and incorporated in the one Redeemer.²³ All “*though many, are one Bread and one Body; for we all partake of that one Bread*”²⁴ and for this reason we become the Body of Christ; not many bodies, but one Body. For as the Bread is composed of many smaller elements but united as one, in a similar manner the many are united in one Body in Christ.²⁵

The unity that is created by the one Head and the one Holy Spirit differentiates the unity of faith, and the unity of worship and participation in the same Mysteries, as well as the unity of the ecclesiastic communion and administration. Unity in the faith is expressed in the common Confession and Teachings of the Christian Truth. This is exalted by St Paul as the Fruit of the growth in Christ by which all Faithful “*come to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him Who is the head – Christ – from Whom 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.*”²⁶

The one and only True Holy Gospel of which “*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,*”²⁷ must be preserved and guarded “*avoiding the profane and idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge.*”²⁸ We must “*reject any divisive man,*”²⁹ “*false-*

¹⁹ Cf. Evdokimov, *Orthodoxia*, pp. 211-212.

²⁰ John 17:21.

²¹ St. John Chrysostom, *To 1 Corinthians*, Homily 1, § 1; and Homily 32, § 1, in Migne, *P.G.*, 61, 3 and 264.

²² *Ibid*, *To Ephesians*, Homily 9, § 3, in Migne, *P.G.*, 62, 72.

²³ St. John Chrysostom, *To Ephesians*, Homily 11, § 1, in Migne, *P.G.*, 62, 81.

²⁴ 1 Corinth. 10:17.

²⁵ St. John Chrysostom, *To 1 Corinthians*, Homily 24, § 2, in Migne, *P.G.*, 61, 200.

²⁶ Ephes. 4:14-16.

²⁷ Gal. 1:8.

²⁸ 1 Tim. 6:20.

teachers,”³⁰ “false-prophets,”³¹ “false-apostles”³² and any “false-Christ”³³ who speak “perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves,”³⁴ consequently alienating them from Christ. St. Epiphanius presents “the Church to be in the entire world”³⁵ “like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.”³⁶

The Orthodox Christian Faith is a unique, one and total organic Teaching, in which all the True Doctrines are united and based on one another so closely that the detachment of one places in danger the entire structure. Even Ecclesiastic History witnesses that the chief-heretics began their false-teachings from small things that they considered insignificant. As a result they fell into major errors that troubled the Church for many years or even centuries.

St. Gregory the Theologian of Nazianzus considered it to be permissible for one to philosophize “about the world or worlds, about the matter, about the soul, about the rational creatures good and bad, about Resurrection, Judgment, reward, Christ’s sufferings,” characterizing that “dealing with such subjects is safe.”³⁷

The unity in worship and participation in the Divine Mysteries refers mainly to the basis of the Doctrines within worship, which makes Baptism one³⁸ and the Bread of the Eucharist one.³⁹ Everyone is watered in the one Holy Spirit though these Mysteries.⁴⁰ Since the basics are the same in worship, the small differences do not contradict one another.

Finally, the unity in the ecclesiastic community and administration is disturbed within the Church by men with their selfish egoism and personal interests. From these unbelievers begin the schisms and the catastrophic and disastrous divisions, which “grow cold” “the love of many.”⁴¹ Those who are in error or heresy hold part of the Christian Truth but cannot proclaim that they are the incarnation of the One, Holy and Apostolic Church. The Orthodox Church is the true New Testament Church, which upholds the original Teachings and Apostolic Tradition undefiled and unchanged from the Day of Pentecost until this very moment.

2. The Church is Holy

If the unity of the Church is her essential attribute, Holiness is her most precious attribute, according to which she is the inexhaustible Source of Sanctification. The Church cleans and regenerates the polluted world and fulfils her Divine Destination. The Church is Holy first, because her invisible Head is by Nature Holy, pouring forth an unlimited

²⁹ Tit. 3:10.

³⁰ 2 Peter 2:1.

³¹ Matth. 7:15; 24:11, 24 Mark 13:22. Luke 6:26. Acts 13:6. 2 Peter 2:1. 1 John 4:1. Rev. 16:13; 19:20; 20:10.

³² 2 Corinth. 11:13.

³³ Matth. 24:24. Mark 13:22.

³⁴ Acts 20:30.

³⁵ St. Epiphanius, *Panarion. Heresy* 31, § 31, in Migne, *P.G.*, 41, 533.

³⁶ Phil. 2:2.

³⁷ St. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Homily* 27, 1, § 10, in Migne, *P.G.*, 36, 25.

³⁸ Ephes. 4:5.

³⁹ 1 Corinth. 10:17.

⁴⁰ 1 Corinth. 12:13.

⁴¹ Matth. 24:12. St. John Chrysostom, *To Ephesians*, Homily 11, § 4, in Migne, *P.G.*, 62, 85.

Sanctification within Himself.⁴² God Who dwells in the Church is Holy and invites the faithful to come out from the sinful world and to become Holy⁴³ as it is written: “Be Holy for I Am Holy.”⁴⁴ The Founder of the Church Who is her invisible Head, is He “Whom the Father Sanctified”⁴⁵ and “anointed ... with the Holy Spirit,”⁴⁶ “the Holy Servant Jesus”⁴⁷ “Who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own Blood,”⁴⁸ which He shed on the Cross “that He might Sanctify and cleanse the Church 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.”⁴⁹ In addition, the Holy Spirit Who gives Life to the Church, is Holy. The Gospel, too, is Holy and as such it should not be given to the “dogs,”⁵⁰ because it contains the Word of God, which is “Truth”⁵¹ and Sanctifies those who hear and accept it.⁵² Holy is the prayer that Sanctifies and transmits Sanctification through the Holy Mysteries and through worship, especially through the Holy Mystery of Eucharist.⁵³

The Orthodox Church is Holy because her members are “partakers of the Heavenly Calling”⁵⁴ by God for Heavenly things “with a Holy Calling,”⁵⁵ which purifies and Sanctifies those who accept it and who separate themselves from the corrupted world, dedicating themselves to God. They are “called to be Saints.”⁵⁶ Through the Holy Mystery of Baptism they “are Sanctified in Christ Jesus,”⁵⁷ called to progress in Holiness and become unchangeably Holy. Hence our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ compares His Church to “dough,”⁵⁸ which changes everything slowly, signifying that the Sanctifying Power of the Church and her Teachings influence the sinful world “uniting all in one Body and transferring it into a different kind of Life.”⁵⁹ Christ generally calls His disciples “light of the world”⁶⁰ and “salt of the earth”⁶¹ as “receiving from Him the logical Power” to correct “the human nature which has fallen and to free those who are rotting.”⁶²

It is true that many members of the Church are also those who are not alive and active Orthodox Christians caught by the hearing of the Word,⁶³ but, regardless of how many they are in number, they cannot pollute the Holiness of the Church. Also, through God’s Divine

⁴² Mitsopoulos, *Themata*, pp. 248-250.

⁴³ 2 Corinth. 6:16-18.

⁴⁴ 1 Peter 1:16. Lev. 11:44, 45; 19:2; 20:7. Evdokimov, *Orthodoxia*, pp. 212-213.

⁴⁵ John 11:36.

⁴⁶ Acts 10:38.

⁴⁷ Acts 4:27.

⁴⁸ Rev. 1:5.

⁴⁹ Ephes. 5:26-27.

⁵⁰ Matth. 7:6.

⁵¹ John 17:17.

⁵² 1 Tim. 4:4-5.

⁵³ Cf. Plato of Moscow, *Orthodox Teaching*, pp. 138-139. Kefalas, *Catechesis*, p. 105. Frangopoulos, *Christian Faith*, pp. 182-183. Mitsopoulos, *Themata*, p. 87.

⁵⁴ Heb. 3:1.

⁵⁵ 2 Tim. 1:9.

⁵⁶ 1 Corinth. 1:2.

⁵⁷ 1 Corinth. 1:2.

⁵⁸ Matth. 13:33.

⁵⁹ St. John Chrysostom, *To Matthew*, Homily 46, § 2, in Montfaucon, v. 7, p. 544. Zigabinos, *To Matthew*, in Migne, *P.G.*, 129, 412.

⁶⁰ Matth. 5:14

⁶¹ Matth. 5:13.

⁶² St. John Chrysostom, *To Matthew*, Homily 46, § 2, in Montfaucon, v. 7, p. 544.

⁶³ Matth. 13:47.

Grace many of them have changed and turned from their evil ways, **living** a very **Holy Life** in Christ. On the other hand, we have **countless Holy** men and women of all ages who became heroes of our Orthodox Christian Faith by upholding the **True Faith** in God or living a virtuous **Life** in Christ. They are also **those** who lived with the fear of God, struggling against sin and ending their lives as **unseeing Saints**. All generations have produced **Saints** and **Holy men, Martyrs and Virgins**. These are the **Fruits** of the **Tree**, which our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has mentioned: “*You will know them by their fruits.*”⁶⁴

In accordance to Holy Scripture, the **Holy Fathers** of the Orthodox Church proclaim the **Holiness** of the Church. St. Ignatios the Theophoros of Antioch **spoke of** the Church of Smyrna in Asia **as being** “*most worthy of God, bearing Holy things.*”⁶⁵

St. Irenaeos proclaimed that “*where the Church is, there is the Spirit of God and where the Spirit of God is, there is the Church and all the Grace.*”⁶⁶

St. Cyril of Jerusalem observed that the Church is called ‘**Catholic**’ for other reasons but mainly “*for the general healing and curing all kinds of sins, having all the named virtues, in works and words and in all spiritual charismata.*”⁶⁷

St. Augustine urged the faithful to honour, love and glorify the Church their Mother, as the **Heavenly Jerusalem, the Holy City** of God, which is distinguished from the evil ones who differ in their customs.⁶⁸

St. John Chrysostom observed that Holy Scripture **refers to** her **as** a virgin. “*And she is called virgin, although she was previously a harlot; and the wonder of the Bridegroom is that He received her as a harlot and made her a virgin.*”⁶⁹

St. Cyril of Alexandria, referring to the use of the biblical term “*as the mountain of Sion,*” **observed** that **the Church** is **so** called because “*she is really high, and overseeing truthfully, she is Holy, for she is a house and city of the Most Holy God.*” **Additionally she is referred to in this way because** “*of the Holy Doctrines in the Church and the supernatural Piety to God,*” **and because** “*the Church of Christ has myriads of Saints.*”⁷⁰

3. The Church is Catholic

The internal and external attributes of **the Church**, which is inseparably **joined** to her unity, is her **catholicity**.⁷¹ Characterizing the Church as “*catholic*” (**not** the schismatic Roman Catholic Church) we mean that she is able to spread throughout the entire world, to be accepted by all nations and tribes, regardless of their spoken tongue or colour of skin.⁷² The Church is expanding in time **and place**, so the word “*catholic*” manifests **the Church as**

⁶⁴ Matth. 7:17, 20..

⁶⁵ St. Ignatius, *To Smyrnaeans*, Introduction, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 110.

⁶⁶ St. Irenaeus, *Heresies*, book III, ch. 24, § 1, in Migne, *P.G.*, 7, 966. Cf. Ibid, in Hadjephraimides, p. 259.

⁶⁷ St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechesis*, 18, § 23, in Migne, *P.G.*, 33, 1044.

⁶⁸ St. Augustine, *Sermo* 214, § 11, in Migne, *P.L.*, 38, 1071.

⁶⁹ St. John Chrysostom, *When Eutropius was found outside the Church*, § 6, in Migne, *P.G.*, 52, 397.

⁷⁰ St. Cyril of Alexandria, *To Obadiah* and *To Amos*, ch. 13-15, in Migne, *P.G.*, 71, 592 and 580.

⁷¹ Cf. Evdokimov, *Orthodoxia*, pp. 213-215.

⁷² Cf. Plato of Moscow, *Orthodox Teaching*, p. 139. Kefalas, *Catechesis*, p. 105. Fragkopoulos, *Christian Faith*, pp.183-185. Mitsopoulos, *Themata*, pp.87,250-252.

Eternal. **Therefore** this attribute is external. **Subsequently** the term requires the inseparability of her unity because, if the churches in different places and nations do not **consist of** the One Church, it would be impossible for the Church to be “*catholic*.” **So** this attribute is internal.⁷³

In Holy Scripture we do not find the term “*catholic*” **although** they proclaim its meaning. In the Old Testament it is foretold **of** the universal (“*catholic*”) ruling of the Messiah **Who** will include **all nations** in His **Kingdom**. Although the **God-governing** Community was restricted only to the Israelites, the future **Kingdom** to come of the Messiah was to include all the nations of the world. The **Promise** given to the Patriarch Abraham determined very clearly that in his seed “*shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.*”⁷⁴ This **Promise** was repeated to the Patriarchs Isaac⁷⁵ and Jacob.⁷⁶ King David and the **Prophets** projected the **Kingdom** of the Messiah expanding to “*the ends of the earth*”⁷⁷ in order that He may “*rule over the nations*”⁷⁸ **and** “*have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth*”⁷⁹ and that “*all men shall be blessed in Him; all nations shall call Him blessed.*”⁸⁰ The Prophet Isaiah **spoke of** the “*mountain of the Lord,*” which “*shall be exalted above the hills*”⁸¹ and “*in Him shall the Gentiles trust,*”⁸² for He shall be “*a Light of the Gentiles*” and “*Salvation to the end of the earth.*”⁸³ Nations **that** did not know Him “*shall call upon*” Him “*and people who are not acquainted with*” Him “*shall flee to Him for refuge.*”⁸⁴ His **Kingdom**, “*from the rising of the sun even to the going down,*” shall be “*glorified among the Gentiles; and in every place incense is offered to*” His “*Name, and a pure offering*”: for His “*Name is great among the Gentiles.*”⁸⁵

In the New Testament, before the Lord’s **Suffering**, He **foretold** that the “*Gospel of the Kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations.*”⁸⁶ After His glorious Resurrection He commanded His **Apostles** to “*go therefore and make disciples of all the nations,*”⁸⁷ “*beginning at Jerusalem.*” **They were** to be His “*witnesses*” “*in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.*”⁸⁸ St. Paul stated that the **Holy Apostles** **literally** “*received Grace and Apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations*”⁸⁹ and **that 25 years after** Christ’s Resurrection their word “*has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world.*”⁹⁰ He also **guaranteed** that when “*the fullness of the Gentiles has come in*” the Church, then “*all Israel will be saved.*”⁹¹

⁷³ Androutsos, *Symbolique*, p. 73.

⁷⁴ Gen. 22:18; 12:3; 18:18.

⁷⁵ Gen. 26:4.

⁷⁶ Gen. 28:14.

⁷⁷ Psalm 2:8.

⁷⁸ Psalm 21(22):28.

⁷⁹ Psalm 71(72):8.

⁸⁰ Psalm 71(72):17.

⁸¹ Is. 2:2.

⁸² Is. 11:10. Dan. 48:35.

⁸³ Is. 49:6.

⁸⁴ Is. 55:4, 5.

⁸⁵ Mal. 1:11.

⁸⁶ Matth. 24:14.

⁸⁷ Matth. 28:19. Mark 16:15.

⁸⁸ Acts. 1:8.

⁸⁹ Rom. 1:5.

⁹⁰ Rom. 10:18.

⁹¹ Rom. 11:25, 26.

St. Ignatios the Theophoros of Antioch used the term “*catholic*,” proclaiming that “*wherever the Bishop appears, there let the congregation be; just as wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church.*”⁹²

The same Truth is expressed in “*The Martyrdom of St. Polycarp*,” which was written shortly after his martyric death: (Polycarp) “*blesses our Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour of our souls and Helmsman of our bodies and Shepherd of the catholic Church throughout the world.*”⁹³ In this first Christian literature, the term “*catholic*” is not only used with the meaning of “*all the universal Church throughout the world,*”⁹⁴ but also “*of the Holy (Catholic) Church in Smyrna,*”⁹⁵ in a pure Orthodox way.

Thus the term “*catholic*” was used by Tertullian, and even by heretics, being adopted as the title of the members of the Church.⁹⁶ However, according to St. Cyprian it generally referred to all Christians who believe in the Orthodox Way.⁹⁷ The term was used in ancient Confessions such as that which known as the “*Apostolic*” Creed, as well as in the *Catecheses* of St. Cyril and the Creed of St. Epiphanius, until it was adopted by the 1st Ecumenical Synod in Constantinople and incorporated into the Nicene Creed.

The meaning of the term is explained by St. Cyril of Jerusalem who observed that the Church is called “*catholic because she is in all the world, from one end to the other,*” “*because she teaches universally and unfailingly all the Doctrines which are beneficial to men, about the visible and invisible things, Heavenly and earthly,*” and even more “*because all mankind submits to piety, rulers and those who being ruled, learned and citizens.*” In other words the Church is called “*catholic*” mainly “*because of the length...*” and “*the width of the world,*” in which she has expanded and also because “*of the mass of the nations which have submitted*” to her. The fullness of the necessary Truth of Salvation is preserved and proclaimed honestly and securely by the Church. The catholicity of the Church also means that she “*will not only, be spread throughout the world but also throughout all ages.*”⁹⁸ In other words, the Church will remain forever, until the end of this age, as a Militant Church, continuously proclaiming, without interruption, the Holy Gospel of the Kingdom and expanding the Power of the Lord throughout the entire world. In the future then, she will be the Bride of the Heavenly Bridegroom, the Holy Jerusalem “*which will descend from Heaven from God*” to rule with her Bridegroom to the Ages of ages.⁹⁹

This Eternal Might and Power of the Church was foretold by the Prophets who spoke of an “*everlasting Covenant*”¹⁰⁰ between God and His people, as well as the Kingdom of the Messiah Who will rise “*upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to establish it, and to support it with judgment and with righteousness, from henceforth and for ever.*”¹⁰¹ And His “*Kingdom shall never be destroyed*” and “*shall stand for ever.*”¹⁰²

⁹² St. Ignatius, *To Smyrnaeans*, 8, 2, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 113.

⁹³ *The Martyrdom of Polycarp*, 19, 2, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 143.

⁹⁴ *Ibid*, 8, 1, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 138.

⁹⁵ *Ibid*, 16, 2, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 141-142.

⁹⁶ Tertullian, *Praescr.*, 30, in Migne, *P.L.*, 2, 48.

⁹⁷ St. Cyprian, *Epistola* 73, 2.

⁹⁸ St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechesis*, XVIII, § 23, in Migne, *P.G.*, 33, 1044. St. John Chrysostom, *To Psalm 44(45)*, § 13, in Migne, *P.G.*, 55, 203.

⁹⁹ Rev. 21: 9-10.

¹⁰⁰ Is. 55:3; 61:8. Jer. 39:40.

¹⁰¹ Is. 9:7

¹⁰² Daniel 2:44.

Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Son of God, very clearly proclaimed that “*the gates of Hades shall not prevail against*”¹⁰³ His Church, promising at the same time that He will send *the “Helper,” “the Spirit of Truth”*¹⁰⁴ to them Who will remain with them “*always, even to the end of the age.*”¹⁰⁵ These Promises of the Lord reveal that the Militant Church will be Eternal and indestructible since the Lord and the Holy Spirit will remain forever with the faithful. This is also revealed by the Parables of the Wheat and Tares¹⁰⁶ and the Dragnet.¹⁰⁷ At the time of the Harvest, which is “*the end of this age*” “*the tares will be gathered,*”¹⁰⁸ and they will be separated from “*the good seeds.*”¹⁰⁹ Then “*the Son of Man will send out His Angels, and they will gather out of His Kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness.*”¹¹⁰ In the second Parable it is emphasized that “*at the end of the age... the Angels will come forth, [and] separate the wicked from among the just.*”¹¹¹

St. Ignatios the Theophoros of Antioch wrote: “*The Lord accepted the ointment upon His Head*¹¹² for this reason: that He might breath incorruptibility upon the Church.”¹¹³

St Irenaeos ascertained that contrary to the heresies of Gnosticism, the Church is unmovable “*and equally always the same.*”¹¹⁴

St Athanasios the Great of Alexandria observed that “*Throne of Christ is the Church, for He rests in her. The Church is Christ’s shining and enlightening all under the Heaven and remaining forever as the sun and the moon.*”¹¹⁵

St John Chrysostom repeatedly referred to this subject and maintained that “*nothing is stronger than the Church,*” which is “*higher than Heaven and wider than the earth*” and “*she never ages but always flourishes.*” Elsewhere the Holy Father proclaimed that the Church “*alone knows to remain for ever*” and “*she shall remain for ever.*” At other times he observed that the Church “*will spread throughout the ages, for her memory is immortal.*”¹¹⁶ Elsewhere he asked: “*By how many the Church was fought, but never defeated? How many tyrants? How many generals? How many kings?*” “*Learned men, powerful, fought in so many ways the new born Church, but they did not uproot her. But some who fought her were delivered up to silence and forgetfulness, she being fought, surpassed Heaven.*” “*For Heaven was established*” and “*it is easier to wipe out the sun rather than to vanquish the Church.*”¹¹⁷ Furthermore, exalting the invincibility and indestructibility of the Church he observed that “*There is nothing more powerful than the Church, oh man ... If you fight a man either you will win or you will be defeated. If you fight the Church, it is impossible for you to win; for*

¹⁰³ Matth. 16:18.

¹⁰⁴ John 14:16, 17.

¹⁰⁵ Matth. 28:20.

¹⁰⁶ Matth. 13:37-43.

¹⁰⁷ Matth. 13:47-50.

¹⁰⁸ Matth. 13:40.

¹⁰⁹ Matth. 13:37.

¹¹⁰ Matth. 13:41.

¹¹¹ Matth. 13:49.

¹¹² Matth. 26:6-13.

¹¹³ St. Ignatius, *To Ephesians*, 17, 1, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 91.

¹¹⁴ St. Irenaeus, *Heresies*, book III, ch. 24, § 1, in Migne, *P.G.*, 7, 966. Cf. *Ibid*, in Hadjephraimides, p. 258.

¹¹⁵ St. Athanasius the Great, *To Psalm 86(87):38*, in Migne, *P.G.*, 27, 392.

¹¹⁶ St. John Chrysostom, *When Eutropius was found outside the Church*, § 6, in Migne, *P.G.*, 52, 397. *Ibid*, *To Ephesians*, Homily 7, § 2; and *To Psalm 44(45)*, § 13, in Migne, *P.G.*, 55, 203.

¹¹⁷ St. John Chrysostom, *To Isaiah*, Homily 4, § 2, in Migne, *P.G.*, 56, 121.

God is more powerful than all ... God established, who can attempt to move? Do you not know His **Mightiness**? He looks down on the earth and **she** trembled; **He** Commands and those which are trembling are made stable ... Much more His Church; He can establish her. The Church is mightier than **Heaven**. 'Heaven and earth shall pass away,'¹¹⁸ My words shall not. What words? 'You are Peter, and on this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.'^{119 120}

The internal reason **for** the Church's eternity and indestructibility is because she is the **Body of Christ**, for "*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.*"¹²¹ The Church has **our Lord** Jesus as her Head and Founder¹²² and the Holy Spirit dwells within her, giving her **Life** and **Sanctifying** all her members. The Holy Spirit gives her **the** "*Power of indestructible Life.*" **However**, this does not mean that the faithful do not participate. By being made alive by the Head of the Church and watered by the **Power of the Holy Spirit**, they become cooperators with God **in order** to realise what He has **Promised concerning** the Church. Hence it is understandable how many **facets** of the Church **consisting of** the seven churches in Asia Minor, the Churches of Revelation or the Church in North Africa and so many other examples, were wiped out by unbelievers. **Nevertheless**, these enemies of Christ's Church did not prevail but **instead they** enriched the **Triumphant Church** in Heaven with **Confessors of our Orthodox Christian Faith**, **glorifying** her with **the** blood of new **Martyrs**.

4. The Church is Apostolic

Finally, the Orthodox Church is Apostolic.¹²³ She is **referred to as** "*Apostolic*" because she remained throughout all centuries, **until** this very moment, **just** as the **Holy Apostles** founded her. She preserved undefiled and unchanged **the Holy Apostles' Teachings** of the Christian Faith, exactly as **taught by them**.¹²⁴ The Orthodox Church has not broken the Apostolic Succession in the line of the **Canonical Ordination of Bishops** who were **Ordained** and placed **in the Church with the authority of the Holy Apostles**, in order to administer the Holy Mysteries **of God**. **In other words** the **Apostolic Succession** of the Church is **notable for** the **Apostolic Teachings that make** the Church throughout the centuries the **Voice of Christ and His Apostles, and through which** today's **Bishops and Priests in the One, Holy, Apostolic Orthodox Church** descend in an unbroken line from the **Holy Apostles**.

This differentiation is only imaginary and not real **because the** Apostolic Succession can be disrupted or abolished, not only through non-canonical ordinations, as **in** the West **when** the Protestants **renounced** either **the** Priesthood itself or just the rank of the **Bishop**. By doing this they disrupted and broke the line of Apostolic Succession but also by **drifting** away from the original Apostolic Teachings, as **it** occurs **with heretics**.

¹¹⁸ Matth. 5:18.

¹¹⁹ Matth. 16:18

¹²⁰ St. John Chrysostom, *Homily before exile*, § 1, in Migne, *P.G.*, 52, 429.

¹²¹ Heb. 13:8; 7:16.

¹²² 1 Corinth. 3:11. Heb. 13:8; 17:16. St. Cyril of Alexandria, *To Isaiah*, book IV, II, in Migne, *P.G.*, 70, 968.

¹²³ Cf. Evdokimov, *Orthodoxia*, pp. 219-223. Kefalas, *Catechesis*, p. 105. Mitsopoulos, *Themata*, pp. 87-88, 252-254. Frangopoulos, *Christian Faith*, pp. 185-186.

¹²⁴ Plato of Moscow, *Orthodox Teaching*, p. 140.

St. Basil the Great assures us that those who detach themselves from the Church because of **heresy**, do not have **the Grace of the Holy Spirit with them** anymore and **therefore they can no longer serve her**. And although the first **heretics had been Ordained** and **thereby had received the Spiritual Gift** according to Apostolic Succession, by breaking away from the One, Holy and Catholic Church “*they became laymen who do not have authority to **Baptise**, nor to **Ordain**, neither could they give the Grace of Holy Spirit from **Whom they had fallen away**.*”¹²⁵

To preserve **the Apostolic Succession** truthfully, it is not sufficient to **merely** pass it down through **Canonical Ordination** of Priesthood by **Canonical Successors** of the **Holy Apostles**. **It must co-exist with** the Apostolic Teachings. Consequently, even if **one of the Bishops** or any of the Presbyters has **Canonical Apostolic Succession**, he falls **away** from it as soon as he **deviates** from the pure Apostolic Teachings. Both the preservation of Apostolic Teachings and **Canonical Ordination** are united internally and inseparably **as** they compose the Apostolic Succession. **Apostolic Teaching is the basis of Apostolic Succession**, whereas **Canonical Ordination** in the Church is the external characteristic, which assures that a local Orthodox **church** is part of the firstborn Church established by the **Holy Apostles**.

St Irenaeos exalted the unity of these two characteristics. He urges the faithful to be obedient to the Presbyters who have the **Succession** from the Apostles and with the **Succession** in the **Episcopacy**, the charisma of **Truth that unites honestly, preserving the Teachings** of the Apostles. **The preaching after the Ordination of a Presbyter confirms** the rest of the **Teachings**.¹²⁶

At the same time St Cyprian emphasized the transmission of the **Authority by the Holy Apostles to administer** the Church and **celebrate** the Holy Mysteries **through Ordination**. Thus, in the Records of the Synod in **Carthage** St Cyprian **said**: “*We have succeeded the **Holy Apostles with the same Authority governing the Church**.*”¹²⁷ In **certain letters** of Firmilianos to St Cyprian, it is proclaimed that the **Authority to forgive sins** was given to the Apostles and to the **Church**. **Being sent by God they established the Bishops to succeed them by Ordination**.¹²⁸

St Clement of Rome speaking **of** Apostolic Succession, noted that the **Holy Apostles** “*preaching both in the country and in the **towns, appointed their first-fruits when they had tested them by the Spirit, to be Bishops and Deacons for the future believers**.*”¹²⁹ Elsewhere he observed “*Our Apostles likewise knew, through our Lord Jesus Christ, that there would be strife over the **Bishop’s Office**. For this reason, therefore, having received complete foreknowledge, they appointed the officials mentioned earlier and afterwards they gave the **Offices a permanent character; that is, if they should die, other approved men should succeed to their ministry**.*”¹³⁰

¹²⁵ St. Basil the Great, *To Amphilochius*, Epistle 1, canon I, in Rallis-Potlis, *Syntagma*, v. 4, p. 90.

¹²⁶ St. Irenaeus, *Heresies*, book IV, ch. 26, § 4, in migne, *P.L.*, 7, 1054-1055. Cf. *Ibid*, in Hadjephraimides, pp. 317-318.

¹²⁷ St. Cyprian, in Trempelas, *Dogmatique*, v. II, p. 363.

¹²⁸ *Ibid*, in migne, *P.L.*, 3, 1216-1217.

¹²⁹ St. Clement of Rome, *Ist Corinthians*, 42, 4, and 44, 2, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 51.

¹³⁰ *Ibid*, *Ist Corinthians*, 44, 1-2, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 52.

5. The Church as the Infallible Keeper and Teacher of the Truth

The attribute of the Church as Apostolic is combined with the unity and the infallibility of the Church. Frankly, if the different Orthodox churches around the world are united to one another, consisting of the one Church of Christ, it is because “the Church, although in all the world until the ends of the earth, received the True Faith from the Apostles and their disciples, carefully preserves the preaching of truth as though having one mouth.” “The dialects of the world are different, but the power of the Tradition is one and the same.”¹³¹ Thus the Orthodox Church remained from the beginning in the Apostolic Tradition and never changed her Apostolic nature, continuing as “one” “first-born and truthful Church,” “the real ancient, in which are incorporated those who are by good intention just,” and which “the many heresies attempt to divide.” Contrary to those who have turned to heresies, we (the Orthodox) who keep to the Apostolic Tradition, say that there is only one ancient and catholic Church, which unites in one faith, by the Will of God, those of different periods.¹³²

The Holy Apostles received the Teachings from the Lord, Who is the actual Truth and they, by God’s Inspiration, preserved it and gave it to the Church, being “the pillar and ground of the Truth.”¹³³ The Church developed this Truth and gave to it formalities, clarifying the Divine Revelation according to the needs of the faithful, never adding to or subtracting from it, but preserving it unchanged in its essence and remaining in the Teachings of the Holy Apostles. On these foundations the Orthodox Church is infallible as is evident in her protection and preservation of Apostolic Tradition, as a Covenant entrusted to her, “not subtracting or decreasing,” nor adding any human embellishments. She “rightly divides the word of the Truth”¹³⁴ against any heretic who dares to doubt the pure Teachings according to the admonition: “O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust.”¹³⁵

The infallibility of the Orthodox Church does not rely on the revelation of new truths, that were not revealed by Christ or His Apostles, but on the infallible development, expression and transmission of the revealed Truths, which are the Treasures of the Covenant that were entrusted to the Church. The Divine Enlightenment that preserves this infallibility, differentiates from the God-inspiration that motivated the Prophets and the Holy Apostles when they were writing their God-inspired books, and which compose the Canon of the Holy Scriptures. This Covenant of the Divine Revelation was treasured within the Church and was preserved undefiled by her, being interpreted infallibly and remaining unchangeable.

This infallibility of the Church was assured by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Son of God, when He promised His Holy Apostles that, through them and to the whole Church, He will be with them “all the days till the end of this age.”¹³⁶ He also promised to send the Holy Spirit to them, “the Spirit of Truth, Who will teach and remind them of all things”¹³⁷ that the Lord said to them, and to guide them “to all Truth.”¹³⁸ These promises of the Lord are not irrelevant and the indestructibility and the immortality of the Church is based

¹³¹ St. Irenaeus, *Heresies*, book I, ch. 10, §§1, 2, in Migne, *P.G.*, 7, 549. Cf. *Ibid.*, in Hadjephraimides, pp. 64-65.

¹³² Clement the Alexandrian, *Stromata*, VII, ch. XVII (298), in *B*, v. 8, p. 298.

¹³³ Gal. 2:15. Cf. Frangopoulos, *Christian Faith*, pp. 186-187. Mitsopoulos, *Themata*, pp. 254-255.

¹³⁴ 2 Tim. 2:15.

¹³⁵ 1 Tim. 6:20.

¹³⁶ Matth. 28:20.

¹³⁷ John 14:26.

¹³⁸ John 16:13.

upon His assurance that “*the gates of Hades shall not prevail against*”¹³⁹ her. How can it be possible for **lies and errors** to enter into a **D**ivine and **E**ternal institution? How can the gates of Hades not prevail against the Church, if lies were to prevail within her? For this reason St Paul calls the Church “*the pillar and ground of the Truth.*”¹⁴⁰

St Irenaeus proclaims that “*where the Church is, there is the Spirit of God and where the Spirit of God is, there is the Church and all the Grace.*”¹⁴¹

¹³⁹ Matth. 16:18.

¹⁴⁰ Gal. 2:15.

¹⁴¹ St. Irenaeus, *Heresies*, book III, ch. 24, § 1, in Migne, *P.G.*, 7, 966. Cf. *Ibid*, in Hadjephraimides, p. 259.