

What is Old Catholicism?
The Old Catholic Faith for Inquirers

Old Catholic Communion of North America
By: Archbishop Michael G Nesmith S.T.M, D.Div

2024

Introduction

I would like to begin this work by sharing about my own journey to Old Catholicism. In the mid-1980s I left the Roman Catholic Church because in my studies I began to understand that the present Roman Church was not in line with the Roman Church as founded by the Apostles.

So, I began to search for a western church that was still adhering to the understanding of the church as founded. My quest led me to explore Western Rite Orthodox Churches. I learned that all of them were not truly a western church but still part of the Eastern Orthodox, following the teachings of the East but using a western style of worship. So, my search continued.

My search for a truly orthodox, yet western church, led me to the Anglican Communion which was the closest western church resembling the Early Church. I became Anglican and was on the path to becoming a deacon and what they called a Canon 9 priest, which was a priest ordained to serve in small mission churches that could not afford a full-time cleric.

Thirteen years after becoming Anglican I found myself in a church divided over issues that were without doubt contrary to the Doctrines of the Early Church and began to seek once again. I learned of the Old Catholic Church which was founded with the goal of returning to what Rome had been prior to when the western churches and eastern churches separated. The founders of Old Catholicism focused on establishing a church fully orthodox (right teaching) in faith and yet remained true to the worship traditions of the Roman Church as long as those traditions did not stray from the orthodoxy all churches once shared.

I readily embraced Old Catholicism and was ordained a deacon in 1998 and a priest in 1999. In 2003 I was ordained a Bishop in the Cathedral of Jesus of Nazareth, Tampa, FL. In 1999 my wife (Kathy) and I started a small storefront church named All Saints Old Catholic Church and All Saints Parish has steadily grown and labored to remain steadfast to this call of Old Catholicism.

Now almost all churches who were once truly Old Catholic, or claimed to be Old Catholic, no longer embrace the orthodoxy on which the denomination was founded. Many including the original churches in Europe known as Utrecht Union profess current modern teachings such as having female clergy and blessing same sex marriage. And others in their teachings and traditions are identical to the current Roman Catholic Church with only a very few differences picked by their leaders. (e.g., allowing married clergy, and rejection of Papal Infallibility) Sadly, these "new" old Catholics are no longer orthodox but heterodox (not orthodox). For me I will always seek to Old Catholic and in doing so submit and teach the way laid out by the Apostles and defined and defended by the Early Church

In the following pages it is my hope it to provide the reader with a basic understanding of what the Early Church believed as well as the intent of the founders of Old Catholicism which was to return to the faith of the early undivided Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. In closing, the Old Catholic Communion of North America was founded to be a “fellowship in faith” of true orthodox Old Catholic churches and clergy. To be a place where all Churches, clergy, and laity can seek to be what the Western Church used to be can come together and worship. To be part of the church which was built on the foundation of the Apostles with Christ as the Cornerstone as written in the verse below:

Ephesians 2:19-20 *Now therefore you are no more strangers and sojourners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone;*

Blessings,

Archbishop Michael Nesmith – STM., Div.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter One.....	1
The Journey.....	1
The Map	3
Distinctives of Each Group	4
Protestant Denominations.....	4
Protestant Summary	7
Catholic and Orthodox.....	8
Chapter Two.....	13
The Destination.....	13
Church Authority – The Councils	18
Worship in the Early Church	22
Chapter Three	27
The Path	27
Appendix:	32
Other Books of the Bible:.....	32
Scripture in the Church Building and Worship	33
Sacraments in Scripture	36
Old Catholic Distinctives from the Founders	38
Relations Between the Orthodox and Old Catholic Churches.....	39
The Church Councils.....	43
Timeline of events preceding the First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea.....	43
Anathemas of the Ecumenical Councils.....	49
Third Ecumenical Council.....	49
Fourth Ecumenical Council	50
Fifth Ecumenical Council.....	53
Seventh Ecumenical Council	57

CHAPTER ONE

The Journey

The purpose of this text is to present and help inquirers to better understand where they are in their faith journey and help them find the path, to be sort of a map, through a plethora of churches and reach a destination of finding a place of worship which is faithful to the teachings and practices of the Church founded by the Apostles and their successors.

Before we begin, I ask you to keep your mind open and your focus on the destination because as with any journey one can become so focused on the details and side paths along the way that these things become their destination. There is an old saying, “The devil is in the details,” and in our search for a Church and a relationship with God obsession with details and individual opinions can be a distraction placed in our minds to keep us from finding the peace we seek.

Every journey we take in life has a reason. It might be simple like buying groceries or going to work. The reason might be more involved, like taking a long vacation trip which requires planning and having good directions. Regardless there is always a reason to take the trip in the first place. I would like to take the time to think about why you are seeking a church.

Why Are You Here

When asking visitors and/or inquirers what brought them to visit our church and/or seeking to become a member I get many different answers. Very few respond they are coming from another Old Catholic Church, instead the answer is usually one of the following:

- Many have left the Roman Catholic Church for some personal reason. Often it is because they divorced and remarried and can no longer receive Holy Communion. Or they married a non-Catholic and are seeking a church both can attend and receive sacraments.
- Others have left another liturgical church over a disagreement with the current religious beliefs of that denomination.
- Some have come to us from various denominations because they began to study church history, in particular the history of the Early Church, and now have doubts about what they have been taught.
- And some were raised in a liturgical church and have been away for a period and now beginning to think about returning to worship for reasons such as having their children baptized, facing a health issue, of just “feel” this is where they need to be.
- Some simple say I was looking for a church and liked what I read or had heard about this one.

The Map

If the destination is to know and practice the Christianity of the Church founded by the Apostles – the Early Church we must first have a starting point, to know where we are. To know here we are we will learn about Christianity in the modern world.

Christianity Today

There are over 2.6 billion Christians in the world and over 40,000 denominations. A denomination is a branch or group within Christianity that has a distinct name, organizational structure, and set of core doctrines. Denominations may differ in their interpretation of many things including essential doctrines (beliefs), however there are some commonly held beliefs listed below:

- God - All Christians, no matter their denomination, believe in one God. They place God as the utmost figure of their religion, stating that He created the entire universe, seen and unseen, and continues to maintain the world in His image. God may also be sometimes called "Our Father" or "The Father".
- Jesus - Christians believe that God had a son, Jesus Christ, and that he was born of the Virgin Mary. They believe that he was sent to earth to walk among humans as one of their own for the salvation of all. They all believe He died on the cross, rose from the dead, and ascended into Heaven to sit at the right hand of the father. Christians believe Jesus will return.
- The Bible - Christians use the Bible as their holy text and that these writings were divinely inspired. The Bible is divided into two sections called the Old Testament and New Testament. At its simplest, the Bible is read by Christians to understand how to live their lives according to God's will.
- Some form of an Original Sin which is the condition of sinfulness that all humans share from the sin committed by Adam and Eve (the Fall).
- All Christians gather to share their faith with other adherents of the same beliefs in some form of organized worship. How and when this happens differs, but coming together is a key tenet of Christianity.
- All believe in a means of salvation and all Christian religions state that only God and Jesus can deliver it to humans.
- All believe in life after death either in Heaven or Hell. What constitutes heaven and hell vary but all Christians believe that they will end up in one or the other after they die.
- Baptism –There are different views regarding the effects of baptism and the age and process required for being baptized but all denominations practice baptism.

- Communion / The Lords Supper – All denominations I am aware of have some ritual where the “body and blood of Christ” is consumed by the faithful. There are different views about what takes place as to whether they do so actually or symbolically.
- Mother Mary - all believe that she was a virgin who gave birth to Jesus Christ.

There can be a great degree of variety even among churches, even within the same denomination. We will refer to these differences as distinctives. Some distinctives concern what are essential matters of faith which we will call doctrine. Other distinctives like worship style, music, etc., we shall call practices. Any difference or disagreement in either can and does result in division or schism.

It would take months to discuss each denomination and their distinctives / doctrine). For simplicity I will sort all these dominations into the three largest groups called Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant and then later break these three groups down into separate denominations in each of the groups.

Distinctives of Each Group

Protestant Denominations

All protestant denominations began at some point in time on, or after 1517 when a Roman Catholic Friar named Martin Luther left the Roman Catholic Church and founded Lutheranism. The division centered primarily on two points of doctrine which are: The proper source of authority in the church and the doctrine of justification (the event or process by which sinners are made or declared to be righteous in the sight of God).

Regarding the doctrine of justification Luther advocated that it is that faith alone justifies (declared or made righteous in the eyes of God) and faith in Christ is a result of hearing the gospel.

The other doctrine was that scripture is the final authority on all matters of faith and that each person could rightly interpret scripture even more so than Clergy and even the Church in Council.

In 1519 a man named John Calvin formed a denomination know as Calvinism. His beliefs included that salvation is only possible through the grace of God in the respect that even before creation, God chose some people to be saved (the elect), and some to be damned. This doctrine is known as predestination. Calvin also believed that a moral life shows that a person is (probably) one of the elect. Calvin developed five points of his faith, often referred to using the acronym (TULIP).

- Total Depravity - asserts that as a consequence of the fall of man into sin, every person is enslaved to sin. People are not by nature inclined to love God, but rather to serve their own interests and to reject the rule of God.
- Unconditional Election - asserts that God has chosen from eternity those whom he will bring to himself not based on foreseen virtue, merit, or faith in God by those people; rather, his choice is unconditionally grounded in his mercy alone. God has chosen from eternity to extend mercy to those he has chosen and to withhold mercy from those not chosen.
- Limited Atonement - asserts that Jesus's substitutionary atonement was definite and certain in its purpose and in what it accomplished. This implies that only the sins of the elect were atoned for by Jesus's death.
- Irresistible Grace - asserts that the saving grace of God is effectually applied to those whom he has determined to save (the elect) and overcomes their resistance to obeying the call of the gospel, bringing them to saving faith. This means that when God sovereignly purposes to save someone, that individual certainly will be saved.
- Perseverance of the Saints - asserts that since God is sovereign and his will cannot be frustrated by humans or anything else, those whom God has called into communion with himself will continue in faith until the end. This is commonly taught as, "once saved always saved."

Below are a few of the Major Denominations Within Protestantism:

Anglican and Episcopalian

The Anglican Church was founded in 1534 and is the national Church of England. In America, the official presence of the Anglican Church is the Episcopal Church. There are also branches that use the name Anglican and are not part of the Episcopal Church. The main distinctive of all "Anglican" denominations is an organizational structure worship and views on sacrament, which is very much like Catholicism. Anglican/Episcopal churches also place great value on historic traditions; however, they believe their reasoning can supersede the traditions and teachings of the Early Church and its councils.

This reasoning resulted in a mixture of Calvinist beliefs being accepted when first founded. Recently, based on their reasoning, many of the Episcopal and Anglican Churches have embraced modern beliefs such as ordination of women, blessing same sex marriage, and even acceptance of some practices considered by many to be pagan. (e.g., The Cathedral of All Souls Episcopal Church in Asheville, N.C., hosted an event in its parish hall for an organization called The Mother Grove Goddess Temple conducted by a self-proclaimed Wiccan priestess know as Mother Grove. *(Faith & Religion by Marcia Segelstein, March 26, 2010.)*

Presbyterian

Founded by John Knox in 1560. The name is from the Greek word for “elder” (presbuteros). Presbyterianism is noteworthy for its unique organizational structure, in which local congregations are governed by teams of elders who, in turn, are part of an overarching assembly of elders. The Presbyterian denomination is also distinctive for holding to a fully Calvinist system of doctrine.

Lutheran

Founded by Martin Luther in 1517, the German friar/professor who started the Protestant Reformation. Lutherans like the Anglicans are liturgical in worship and have a high sacramental theology. Like many other Protestant denominations, Lutherans have now largely divided into liberal and conservative branches.

Baptist

Founded by John Smith in 1606. The Baptist denomination is one of the more well-known in the United States. Two things in particular make them unique. The first is their insistence that baptism must be reserved only for individuals mature enough to make a personal profession of faith and done by full immersion. The second is their emphasis on the independence and self-governance of local church congregations (although many local Baptist churches choose to be affiliated with larger Baptist conventions, like the Southern Baptist Convention).

Methodist

Founded by John Wesley in 1739. Wesley was an Anglican priest who pioneered new ministries on the American frontier. Methodist theology is traditionally Arminian. (Arminian beliefs are that God's grace is universal and that His grace, allowing regeneration and ongoing sanctification, is resistible (free will). Methodist worship services are often more formal/liturgical, but some are contemporary.

Pentecostal and Charismatic

Pentecostalism began in the late 19th century and is the largest Protestant denomination worldwide. Its main distinctive is its emphasis on the continuance of the miraculous gifts of the Spirit (healing, tongues, and prophecy). Traditional Pentecostal distinctives also include: 1) the belief that the “baptism in the Holy Spirit” is an event coming after conversion, and 2) the belief that Spirit-baptism is always evidenced by speaking in tongues. Some branches of Pentecostalism also place an emphasis on trying to return to the conditions and practices of the first-century church (as described in the book of Acts).

Pentecostalism also has many sub-denominations, including Classical Pentecostalism, the Assemblies of God, the Foursquare Church, Holiness Pentecostals, and the Apostolic Church.

Churches of Christ

They developed from various religious movements in the United States in the early 19th century, especially those led by Barton W. Stone, Thomas Campbel, and Alexander Campbell. These men had all been Presbyterians. They emphasize baptism and “Bible-only” teaching. They generally reject the use of creeds and historical theology when forming their doctrine. Some Churches of Christ are also known for forbidding the use of musical instruments in worship services.

Anabaptists

Anabaptist groups emerged in 1523 out of the radical wing of the Protestant Reformation — those who distanced themselves from participating in society. Today, Anabaptist offshoots include the Mennonites, the Amish, and the Hutterites. They are well known for their emphasis on pacifism, non-participation in military or political matters, and (in some cases) living in secluded, alternative communities.

Protestant Summary

There have been countless reformers since Martin Luther first broke away from the Roman Catholic Church. Many claim that their teachings are to correct the errors in the Roman Catholic Church, or some other protestant church, and once again be the true church as established by the Apostles. Some have even claimed to have been visited by Jesus and told they had been chosen to rebuild His Church which has fallen into Apostasy shortly after the death of the first Apostles. The result of the ever-continuing reformation is thousands of denominations, numerous and often contrary interpretations of the same verses of scripture, and distinctives which separate them from the Catholic, Orthodox, and each other.

Almost all have some parts of the beliefs of the early reformers in their tenants. By Faith Alone, Scripture Alone, some form of salvation, and belief that the individual church, or even the individual believer, can interpret the meaning of Scripture are the primary distinctives.

Some are very traditional in teachings on subjects like repentance of sin, marriage, worship style, and more. Others teach love is all you need. And others use reason and modern social views to interpret or even reject the Bible. Currently there are multiple teachings regarding end times and the second coming of Christ. Regarding “end times” a very recent doctrine developed in the middle of the 19th regards faithful be taken up prior to a coming tribulation and final judgment. This “doctrine” is the product of one person’s interpterion of a single verse of scripture and was never taught in any denomination prior to that time.

Worship services can be liturgical, structured, or with some denominations, attending worship is more like attending a concert, show, or pep rally.

Catholic and Orthodox

The reader needs to know that prior to 1054 the Catholic and Orthodox were one church. The Roman Church was the Latin / Western Church centered in Rome and the Orthodox was the Greek / Eastern Church centered in Constantinople. Both referred to themselves as the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church – Catholic for short. In 1054 these churches separated (called the Great Schism) over issues of church leadership and theology.

Commonly Held Beliefs:

Like all denominations they too believe that the writers of the books of the Bible were divinely inspired and should be read by all. However, both believe that the Bible should be interpreted based on the Doctrine of the Apostles whose minds were opened to understand the meaning of Scripture (Luke 24:45). They both believe that Apostolic Doctrine has been preserved and passed on from one generation to the next in the councils, writings, and practices of the church, especially the church of the first 400 years.

Both have a church hierarchy of clergy made up of bishops, priests, and deacons. The clergy are ordained and have what is referred to as apostolic succession. Apostolic succession is the belief that all authority has been passed down from the first apostles, who then passed on their apostolic authority to the next successor.

Both believe God is a Trinity: One God consisting of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Both proclaim the same faith in Christ, and both believe there are seven sacraments (a religious ceremony or ritual regarded as imparting divine grace) they are baptism, confirmation, penance, communion, marriage, holy orders, and the anointing of the sick.

Both have worship which is liturgical which means using a liturgy which is a commonly defined ritual. The Holy Eucharist, also called The Mass is the principal act of worship and both believe in the Eucharist the bread and wine becoming the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ

Both believe in the Invocation of the Saints; The sinless life of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the honor due to her as Theotokos (The Mother of God); Confession in the presence of a priest; Use of icons of some form.

Catholic:

When most people use or hear the word, “catholic” they immediately think of the Roman Catholic Church. Most are not aware that while the Roman Catholic Church is the world’s largest denomination it is not the only “catholic church.” There are others including over 20 Eastern Churches in communion with the Roman Church that use the noun catholic in their name.

There are two sub-groups not in communion with the Roman Catholic Church who also use the name catholic. They are known as Independent Catholic and Old Catholic. In the information below we will focus on the distinctives of the Roman Catholic, Independent Catholic, and Old Catholic denominations.

Roman Catholic Church

Believes it is the only true church. This means they believe the Roman Catholic Church is the only church in existence that is the continuation of the church founded by the Apostles. As such they believe this sets them forth as the supreme teacher and guardian of the faith. And that Holy Spirit causes “the understanding of both the realities and the words of the heritage of the faith is able to grow in the life of the Church” (CCC, 94). The Roman Catholic church takes this to mean that the Church progresses in its understanding and expression of doctrine. In other words, doctrine can develop over time, growing from the “seed” that existed in the days of the early Church. And that any developed doctrines are binding on all Christians.

View the Bishop of Rome as the most important and powerful bishop in the church and refer to him as the Pope. The Pope is believed to be the successor of Saint Peter and as such he is the leader of the worldwide Roman Catholic Church.

Believe in Papal supremacy which is the teaching that the Pope of Rome has immediate, supreme, universal jurisdiction over every Christian. In effect, he is the physical head of the Church. No one, not even an ecumenical council, can supposedly overturn the ruling of a pope. Rejection of this dogma endangers your salvation. This belief is more fully expressed in the belief of Papal infallibility which teaches that the pope cannot err in questions of faith and morals when speaking ex cathedra (“from the throne”).

Roman Catholics believe in “Original Sin” which every human being is born with except for Mary, the mother of Jesus, as well as Jesus himself. “Original Sin” stresses that guilt of Adam and Eve’s sin is imputed on all their descendants and makes us guilty of that sin and deserving of Divine wrath.

Old Catholic

Old Catholics formally left the Roman Catholic Church in 1870 over the new Roman Doctrine of Papal Infallibility. It was the intent of the founders to return to the distinctives of the Roman Church they once had prior to the very first separation of the church, which occurred in 1054 and is known as the Great Schism. In short to return to the faith as established by the Apostles, and in particular the time span of the first four great councils of the church.

Independent Catholic

This is predominantly a group of churches that are no longer Roman Catholic for various reasons. Some fully embrace all the beliefs of the Roman Catholic Church except for allowing married clergy. Other may also allow both married clergy and female ordination. And yet others have embraced many of the modern beliefs such as blessing same sex unions. All claim to possess valid Apostolic Succession usually through the Old Catholic Church which is accepted as being valid by the Roman Church and some Orthodox.

Summary of the Old Catholic and Independent Catholic Groups

Currently there are both Old Catholics and Independent Catholics that have the distinctives of the Old Catholic movement. There those who say they are Old Catholic and have the distinctives of the Independent Catholic and are not truly Old Catholic.

Orthodox:

Believes it is the only true church. This means they believe the Orthodox Faith is the only church in existence that is the continuation of the church founded by the Apostles.

There are more than thirty The Orthodox Churches and they are all autocephalous which mean their primal bishop does not report to any higher-ranking bishop. And they are autonomous, which means each diocese is self-governing to a certain degree in its internal matters, but its head is appointed or confirmed by the autocephalous Church which nurtures it.

Do not believe that doctrine can develop or change over time. Instead, they believe all doctrine of the faith was fully revealed to the Apostles and delivered to the church. And that the church is called to teach and live this unchanging faith.

Orthodox spirituality is mainly expressed through prayer, daily Christian living, and worship, which ultimately leads to union with the divine uncreated Light (Christ) (theosis).

Believe in "Ancestral Sin" which emphasizes that Adam and Eve's sin brought sin onto the world made us subject to sinful tendencies, sickness, suffering and death.

Consider all bishops equal and that only the entire church coming together in council can interpret and defend doctrine and even then, decrees of the council must serve to clarify / interpret only the original doctrine established by the Apostles and the Early Church.

Believe that Mary was subject to ancestral sin and was made pure and sinless by the Holy Spirit at the time of her consent to become the Theotokos.

Believe that Mary died because of ancestral sin and that after her death her body was taken up into heaven.

Other differences include views on clerical celibacy, administration of sacraments, saints, and understanding of grace to name a few. More of these differences will be explained in more depth later in this text.

Closing Comments

Now dear reader, take time to reflect on the churches you have attended, or been a member of, and think about what we have learned so far. Below are some questions for thought. Make notes of any question you have for future discussion. If you are in a study group what is the interpretation / consensus of the group?

- Where do the churches we are familiar with agree and disagree?
- How can all these churches and individuals be correct when they all do not agree?
- How do we know what is true?
- Can the Truth as revealed by Christ to His chosen Apostles, the men who had their minds opened to the meaning of Scripture (Luke 24:45) be reinterpreted with a different meaning today and still be the Truth as proclaimed by the Apostles?
- How did the church at the time of the Apostles worship and what did they teach and believe?

How do the verses below relate to your beliefs? If you are in a study group what is the interpretation / consensus of the group?

And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. (Acts 2:42)

Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which you have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle. (2 Thessalonians 2:15)

And the angel of the Lord spoke unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goes down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert. And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace queen

CHAPTER TWO

The Destination

It is safe to say to understand the destination we need to come to know and worship Christ in the Church as established through His chosen Apostles. However, in many of the groups and denominations we have studied claim they are the group continuing the faith of the early church. And we have read very briefly about the disagreements in how faith is defined.

This should lead an inquirer to a desire to learn at least some of the primary distinctives of the Early Church. This knowledge will become our compass as well as our means of testing the credibility and truth, the “spirit” of any teaching we may hear, read, or be taught. And this knowledge will help us know the correct way to live as disciples and express this truth ourselves.

The Bible

We will begin by learning more about the Bible and how it came to be. Contrary to what some seem to believe God did not dictate word for word what was to be written. Both the Old and New Testaments contain writings, we call books, which were documents written down to preserve and ensure the continuity of the oral teachings of the Prophet or Apostle.

The books currently found in the Bible were selected by the leaders and teachers of the Hebrew and Christian faiths. There were other books that were commonly used in worship by both the Hebrew and Christian congregations that were not included in the final selection (cannon). Some were excluded because they were determined by leaders to be a false doctrine (heretical) and not divinely inspired. Others were more about worship practice or historic events and many of those teachings still exist in church distinctives and practices. Some of these writings / books are listed in the Appendix.

The Old Testament:

- The Old Greek or Septuagint (aka the LLX) is a Greek version of the Hebrew Old Testament and the first known translation of the Bible outside of its original language. It was completed in the fourth century B.C.E by 70 Hellenistic (Greek-speaking) Jewish rabbis who translated old Hebrew, Aramaic, and Syrian texts. It is also the version of the Bible that was in use at the time of Christ and His Apostles. It contains books considered essential to the faith by Orthodox and Catholics that are not found in the Old Testament used by Protestants. commonly called the Deuterocanon or Apocrypha. These books are commonly called the Deuterocanon or Apocrypha. The Septuagint is still used by the Orthodox.

- In the fourth century Saint Jerome translated the LLX into Latin and this version is known as the Vulgate for use by the Catholic Church. This version of the Bible also contains the Deuterocanon. The Vulgate was translated in English and other languages as was in use until the early 20th century.
- The Masoretic version of the Old Testament is the version of the Old Testament than many believe to be the traditional Hebrew text of the Jewish Bible. The Masoretic text as used today was compiled around 700 A.D. by Jewish Rabis using text and translations from the 2nd century and after. The 2nd century translators elected to omit the Deuterocanon as well as some verses and language in the remining text to best preserve the Jewish belief that the Messiah is yet to come.
- This text is the basis for most Protestant translations of the Old Testament such as the King James Version, English Standard Version, New American Standard Bible, and the New International Version. After 1943, it has also been used for some Catholic Bibles, such as the New American Bible and the New Jerusalem Bible. However, the current version of the Catholic Bible also contains the Deuterocanon or Apocrypha. It is also of importance knowing that the original King James version included these books in a separate section and being considered good for study. They were eventually no longer included to save on printing costs.

Which is the best translation of the Old Testament? Let us consider the text below which was written in 2nd century A.D when a Saint named Justin Martyr investigated several Old Testament texts being used in various Jewish synagogues. He ultimately concluded that the Jews who had rejected Christ had also rejected the Septuagint, and were now tampering with the Hebrew Scriptures themselves which were later translated into the Masoretic version:

“But I am far from putting reliance in your teachers, who refuse to admit that the interpretation made by the seventy elders who were with Ptolemy [king] of the Egyptians is a correct one; and they attempt to frame another. And I wish you to observe, that they have altogether taken away many Scriptures from the [Septuagint] translations effected by those seventy elders who were with Ptolemy, and by which this very man who was crucified is proved to have been set forth expressly as God, and man, and as being crucified, and as dying” (~150 A.D., Justin Martyr, Dialogue with Trypho the Jew, Chapter LXXI)

The New Testament:

Today all Bibles contain 27 books called the New Testament. However, When the Apostles went forth to proclaim the Good News (Gospel) there was no New Testament, nor had Jesus provided any known written text or instructions. The Apostles went forth and proclaimed what they had been revealed to them by Jesus in the years they traveled with Him. This teaching is known as Apostolic Doctrine.

As the Christian faith spread there were many texts written to better retain the Truth taught by the Apostles. Most of the texts were written by disciples of the Apostles who they had chosen to lead the churches founded by the Apostles. As time passed there were numerous texts and just like the Old Testament some taught a false doctrine (heretical) and not divinely inspired. Others were more about worship practice or historic events.

To preserve the doctrine of the Apostles church leaders came together at various times in council to select the texts (canonize) that best taught the Apostolic Doctrine that had been passed to them. The earliest known complete list of the 27 books is found in a letter written by Athanasius, a 4th-century bishop of Alexandria, dated to 367 AD. The 27-book New Testament was first formally canonized during the councils of Hippo (393) and Carthage (397) in North Africa.

In summary:

The Bible is called the written Word of God. This does not mean that the Bible fell from heaven ready-made. Neither does this mean that God dictated the Bible word for word to men who were merely His instruments.

The Old Testament documents reveal the interactions between God and His chosen people of Israel and how the people understood God's will. And of special importance the Old Testament looks toward the fulfillment of God's promises to His people, especially in the form of the Messiah (Hebrew for "anointed one") of God to His people and the salvation of all humankind.

The New Testament forms the heart of the Christian faith and is the highest expression of the Apostolic Doctrine of the Church on which the Church is built. Holy Scripture and Apostolic Doctrine together are referred to as the Holy or Sacred Tradition of the Church and together are the foundation and Cornerstone of the faith.

Now with this information let's reflect on some scriptures and discuss.

Below is a reading from 2 Maccabees which is a book both in the Orthodox and Catholic Old Testament. And was at one time included in the Apocrypha of the King James Version. This helps to explain the difference in a distinctive between the groups we have discussed, it being prayer for the dead.

And so betaking themselves to prayers, they besought him, that the sin which had been committed might be forgotten. But the most valiant Judas exhorted the people to keep themselves from sin, forasmuch as they saw before their eyes what had happened, because of the sins of those that were slain. 43 And making a gathering, he sent twelve thousand drachms of silver to Jerusalem for sacrifice to be offered for the sins of the dead, thinking well and religiously concerning the resurrection, 44 (For if he had not hoped that they that were slain should rise again, it would have seemed superfluous and vain to pray for the dead,) 45 And because he considered that they who had fallen asleep with godliness, had great grace laid up for them. 46 It is therefore a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from sins. (2 Maccabees 42-46)

The verses below are from Jude and 2 Timothy and refer to events not to be found in any translation being used of the Old Testament. Yet these teachings are quoted in the New Testament and are an example of teachings not in the Old Testament still being accepted by the very men who had their minds opened and as such especially important, if not inspired.

Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee. And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints. (Jude 9,14)

Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith. (2 Timothy 3:8)

What does the New Testament say about oral teaching? Let's look at the verses below.

- *Be followers of me, even as I also am of Christ. ² Now I praise you, brethren, because you remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you. (1 Cor 11:1-2)*
- *For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when you received the word of God which you heard of us, you received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually works also in you that believe. (1 Thessalonians 2:13 KJ2000)*
- *And the things that you have heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also. (2 Timothy 2:2 KJ2000)*
- *Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which you have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle. (2 Thessalonians 2:15 KJ2000)*
- *And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. (Acts 2:42 KJ2000)*

Church Authority – The Councils

We have read how the church came together in a council to select the books of the New Testament. This coming together in council has been the way of determining the true Apostolic Doctrine of the church since the very beginning.

The Apostolic Council

The very first council is referenced in chapter 15 of the Book of Acts where we learn there were certain men teaching that unless the old laws of the Old Testament were followed, and referenced the law of circumcision, that one could not be saved. These men were the Hellenist (Greek) Jews who had converted to Christianity. Paul and Barnabus had, “no small dispute and dissension with them.” And the church met to resolve this first dispute regarding the understanding the doctrine of the Apostles and the Church.

The history of the dispute is also referred to in the 2nd chapter of Galatians where we also learn that even Peter was silent and fearful in opposing the teaching of Hellenist. And when Paul returned to Antioch, he [Paul] withstood Peter as he [Peter] was to blame. In this chapter we also learn that James (bishop of Jerusalem), Cephas (Peter), and John were considered the “Pillars of the Church.” It is of significance to note that no one Apostle or Bishop was considered supreme.

In Acts we learn how the Apostles and Elders (bishops and presbyters) came together to discuss this concern and after much debate Peter stated that God spoke about how God had chosen him to proclaim the Gospel to the Gentiles and he believed that God had put no difference between the Jews and the Gentiles. That the church should not “test God” by requiring the yoke of the law, which could not even be borne by the Jews, should not be placed upon the Gentiles. That God knows if their hearts had been purified by acceptance of the Holy Spirit in faith and the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ had saved the gentiles. After listening to Peter [Cephas] Paul and Barnabus spoke of the miracles and wonders done by God among the Gentiles in their ministry.

When all had been said James spoke to all present regarding their calling and proclaimed his [James] judgment on the matter which was that the Gentiles who have turned to God not be troubled with having to follow the Laws but only that they abstain from defilements of idols, from fornication, from things strangled, and from blood. The decision of James pleased the apostles and elders, and they gathered the multitude (church) together and read their epistle of the decision and the church rejoiced.

Additional Councils:

There were many times prior to the Great Schism when the Elders of the church came together to better define the Doctrine of the Apostles which had been handed down to them. Some councils better defined church practices and worship, others were called to address false beliefs (heresies) and remove them from the teaching of church as it was done in the Book of Acts which we just discussed.

Those that were called to address specific heresies are referred to as Ecumenical Councils of which there are seven (see the Appendix for more information). It is important to understand that these Councils did not introduce new doctrines, they defined and defended the Doctrine of the Apostles which had been handed down. As with the council in the Book of Acts, an epistle was sent forth to the entire church of the decision/s made. Those who were found to be in error were called to repent and if not faced with being anathemized, which is a solemn full condemnation of being fully removed from the Church until full repentance was made.

One of the best know “epistles” is the Nicene Creed. The original Nicene Creed was first adopted in the year 325 in Nicea and was called to address the teaching of a Bishop named Arius who declared that Christ is not truly divine but a created being. That God alone is immutable and self-existent, and the Son is not God but a creature with a beginning.

The Nicene Creed as we know it was written in the year 381 at the 2nd Ecumenical Council held in Constantinople. It summarizes the faith for the entire church and is still proclaimed to this day. It is also important to realize the Nicene Creed was written before the Books of the New Testament were selected. This means the Creed is an important part of interpretation of Apostolic Doctrine and should be used to help interpret the New Testament.

Below is the Nicene we read at every Eucharist – think and discuss what it says about God as revealed in three persons:

- God?
- Jesus?
- The Holy Spirit?

What does it say about end times? How does it relate to current doctrines being taught like Jesus returning for a 1000-year reign and/or the Rapture?

What are the stated marks or characters of the church?

Nicene Creed

I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages. God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father; through Him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation He came down from heaven, and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, (here genuflect or bow) and became man.

For our sake He was crucified under Pontius Pilate, He suffered death and was buried, and rose again on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.

He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. And He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and His kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father, who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified, Who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.

I confess one baptism for the forgiveness of sins, and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

In closing we should now understand that the Bible is the highest but not sole source of both Doctrines and Distinctives of the Church. However, the interpretation of the Scriptures resides in the Apostolic Doctrine or Tradition because after all it was these divinely inspired men who proclaimed the doctrine they had learned from the very Incarnate Word. Together they make up what is called Holy or Sacred Tradition on which the Church rests. We learned how the Holy Tradition has been passed on by the Apostles to their successors in what is known as Apostolic Succession and Holy Tradition is defined and proclaimed by the leaders of the church in council as was done in the Book of Acts.

In the next chapter we will look at what worship was like in the Early Church as well as sacraments, if any, they professed.

Worship in the Early Church

We need to keep in mind that the earliest Christians primarily viewed themselves as the Jewish remnant centered around Jesus the Messiah, and as such they tended to carry a lot of continuity with Jewish tradition. They read the Hebrew Scriptures (our “Old Testament”), they prayed Jewish prayers, and they maintained a lot of the patterns and principles of Jewish synagogue and temple worship.

The two verses below from the Book of Acts provides some important insight into the worship of the very first churches.

Acts 2:42 And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

Acts 20:7 And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the next day; and continued his speech until midnight.

We can easily see worship was on the first day of the week (Sunday) which was the day of the resurrection. They were steadfast (resolutely or dutifully firm and unwavering) in following the Apostles Doctrine, fellowship (people with the same purpose, experience, or interest,) the breaking of bread (The Lords Supper), and prayers (which in fellowship would include corporate as well as private).

So, we are learning the early church had a particular form of worship (liturgical) and as the following verses indicate the Lords Supper was the most sacred part of weekly worship and that partaking of the body and blood was not to be taken lightly. In fact, partaking unworthy could lead to damnation. I don't think the Apostle Paul had a mere symbolic remembrance in mind regarding exactly what the bread and wine became.

The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? (1 Cor 10:16)

For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he comes. Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.

For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world. Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another. And if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that ye come not together unto condemnation. And the rest will I set in order when I come. (1 Cor 23-34)

We learn even more about the worship of the early church in ancient texts. First, we will briefly look at a text known as the Didache aka The Lord's Teaching Through the Twelve Apostles to the Nations written in the first century (60 AD) and commonly considered to be the first genre of a catechism.

The Didache Chapter 14. Christian Assembly on the Lord's Day

But every Lord's Day gather yourselves together, and break bread, and give thanksgiving after having confessed your transgressions, that your sacrifice may be pure. But let no one that is at variance with his fellow come together with you, until they reconciled that your sacrifice may not be profaned. For this is that which was spoken by the Lord: In every place and time offer to me a pure sacrifice; for I am a great King, says the Lord, and my name is wonderful among the nations.

Chapter 9. The Thanksgiving (Eucharist)

Now concerning the Thanksgiving (Eucharist), thus give thanks. First, concerning the cup: We thank you, our Father, for the holy vine of David Your servant, which You made known to us through Jesus Your Servant; to You be the glory forever. And concerning the broken bread: We thank You, our Father, for the life and knowledge which You made known to us through Jesus Your Servant; to You be the glory forever. Even as this broken bread was scattered over the hills, and was gathered together and became one, so let Your Church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into Your kingdom; for Yours is the glory and the power through Jesus Christ forever. But let no one eat or drink of your Thanksgiving (Eucharist), but they who have been baptized into the name of the Lord; for concerning this also the Lord has said, Give not that which is holy to the dogs. Matthew 7:6

Chapter 10. Prayer after Communion

But after you are filled, thus give thanks: We thank You, holy Father, for Your holy name which You caused to tabernacle in our hearts, and for the knowledge and faith and immortality, which You made known to us through Jesus Your Servant; to You be the glory forever.

You, Master almighty, created all things for Your name's sake; You gave food and drink to men for enjoyment, that they might give thanks to You; but to us You freely gave spiritual food and drink and life eternal through Your Servant. Before all things we thank You that You are mighty; to You be the glory forever. Remember, Lord, Your Church, to deliver it from all evil and to make it perfect in Your love, and gather it from the four winds, sanctified for Your kingdom which You have prepared for it; for Yours is the power and the glory forever. Let grace come, and let this world pass away. Hosanna to the God (Son) of David! If anyone is holy, let him come; if anyone is not so, let him repent. Maranatha. Amen. But permit the prophets to make Thanksgiving as much as they desire.

The other text we will look at was written between 153 and 155 A.D., by Saint Justin Martyr who became a Christian at Ephesus, It is a great text because it offers a simplified version of church theology intended for those who had no idea what a “bishop” was, or even what “Amen” meant. It’s like stumbling upon a children’s Sunday school class from the 2nd century. Below is from Justin’s text on the Eucharist, from chapters 65 and 66, Administration of the Sacraments:

But we, after we have thus washed him who has been convinced and has assented to our teaching, bring him to the place where those who are called brethren are assembled, in order that we may offer hearty prayers in common for ourselves and for the baptized [illuminated] person, and for all others in every place, that we may be counted worthy, now that we have learned the truth, by our works also to be found good citizens and keepers of the commandments, so that we may be saved with an everlasting salvation.

Having ended the prayers, we salute one another with a kiss. There is then brought to the president of the brethren bread and a cup of wine mixed with water; and he taking them, gives praise and glory to the Father of the universe, through the name of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, and offers thanks at considerable length for our being counted worthy to receive these things at His hands.

And when he has concluded the prayers and thanksgivings, all the people present express their assent by saying Amen. This word Amen answers in the Hebrew language to ge’noito [so be it].

And when the president has given thanks, and all the people have expressed their assent, those who are called by us deacons give to each of those present to partake of the bread and wine mixed with water over which the thanksgiving was pronounced, and to those who are absent they carry away a portion.

And this food is called among us Eucharistia [the Eucharist], of which no one is allowed to partake but the man who believes that the things which we teach are true, and who has been washed with the washing that is for the remission of sins, and unto regeneration, and who is so living as Christ has enjoined.

For not as common bread and common drink do we receive these; but in like manner as Jesus Christ our Saviour, having been made flesh by the Word of God, had both flesh and blood for our salvation, so likewise have we been taught that the food which is blessed by the prayer of His word, and from which our blood and flesh by transmutation are nourished, is the flesh and blood of that Jesus who was made flesh.

The Church Building

Now we will learn about the church building. One of the oldest known places of worship is in Dura-Europos, Syria. It is believed to have been built as a house in 229 AD and started being used as a church between 233 and 256 AD. This means it's around 1782 years old. The church had a large platform in the biggest room which served as the altar as well a smaller raised platform to elevate the speaker. The walls have incredible frescoes and wall paintings (Icons) in the area used as a baptistry (where they would do baptisms). These images are some of the oldest Christian icons in the world. One depicts the Pharaoh and Infancy of Moses. Another has elegantly dressed women carrying torches (at the font), approaching what appears to be the empty sepulcher of Christ and two stars believed to represent angels. But most profound (to me) is they found fragments of scrolls with Eucharistic prayers that are related to the text of the Didache.

In closing liturgical prayer and worship were ingrained in the earliest church. Worship was coming together on Sunday in fellowship to sing hymns, to hear the scriptures, to be taught, and to partake of the sacraments. And this worship took place in a building which was set apart and furnished with fonts, a designated place to speak, a table or altar for celebration of the Lords Supper, and decorated with images (Icons).

Now let's take time to reflect and discuss what we have learned about worship in early church and how it compares to worship today.

- Which groups we have discussed best carry on the same worship as the first churches?
- What are some of the parts of the worship service they have in common?

CHAPTER THREE

The Path

The early church should now be in better focus in our minds. Below is a summary:

- Scripture and Apostolic Doctrine work hand in hand to define the faith in what is called Holy (Sacred) Tradition.
- The Septuagint is the translation of the Old Testament which was used.
- The authority was in a full council whose primary purpose is to interpret and defend the Holy Tradition as passed on through Apostolic Succession and not add new teaching or doctrine.
- There have only been seven major (ecumenical) councils before the church separated into the Roman Catholic west and the Orthodox east.
- We know how and when the church worshiped, and sacraments were part of their belief and practice.
- We know that all churches were autonomous and autocephalous and yet were all part of the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church (catholic) because they all embraced the core teachings and practices in the Holy Tradition.

Now having a working understating of the early church, it should be easier to discern and sort which groups and denominations today either are or resemble the early church. However, even when making this distinction there are still numerous denominations and most of them not all embracing the same doctrines. So, there must be another key bit of knowledge we need to unlock our discernment.

The Fork in the Road

For roughly the first four hundred years the church was “catholic” even though there were two major groups, the Latin west and the Greek east.

The Pope was considered the successor of Peter and his SEE, the area of a bishop's ecclesiastical jurisdiction, was the entire Latin Church with Rome being the seat of the Latin Church. Being the succession of the Apostle Peter, he was given a position of Primacy (of honor) over all bishops and his teaching and counsel were greatly respected. However, like Peter in the Book of Acts he was still subject to the decisions of a council.

The Patriarch of Constantinople was considered second to Peter in Primacy, much like Paul to Peter. His SEE was the entire Greek Church and Constantinople was the seat.

Towards the end of the fourth century the Roman Church was facing multiple heresies that were dividing the church. A gifted bishop named Augustine was instrumental in helping defend the church from these heresies. He is now known as St. Augustine of Hippo in the West and Blessed Augustine in the East. He ranks not only among the greatest Fathers and Doctors of the Church. It can be said without fear of contradiction that Augustine was and is the most important Church Father in the history of western Christianity. However, below are some of his teachings that were not part of the faith of the Early Church:

- He strongly believed based on his reason alone that only the canonical books of Scripture were divinely inspired and without error. In short “scripture alone” and not Scripture and Apostles Doctrine.
- Augustine taught that Adam’s “original sin” energized all his unlawful desires. This “original sin,” he said, “has passed on to all men through the seed of man by the procreation of the flesh; and only those who, by Christ, are regenerated in their souls out from the body’s defilement within are saved.” His claim is verified in the following quotes:
- “Adam bound his offspring also with the penalty of damnation, an offspring bound with the sin by which he had corrupted himself...so that his progeny, born through fleshly concupiscence, received the fitting retribution for his disobedience....[The] human race was burdened with original sin throughout the ages, burdened with the manifold errors and sorrows down to the final and endless torment with the rebel angels.”
- Augustine taught that baptism was instituted to wash away “original sin,” the guilt we inherited at conception. Augustine believed that the sexual act is mingled with evil, Adam’s guilt, is transmitted to those born by such generation. He taught that it was for this reason that children are regenerated in baptism to forgive sins contracted by this evil.
- The Pelagianists were one group of heretics which Augustine fought against. They emphasized human will. They taught that salvation could be attained through one’s own efforts, or through one’s own will and works. When Augustine tried to combat this heresy, he went to the opposite extreme, teaching that only God’s will was operative, He is the Almighty One, He will even force or “convert” man’s will to conform to His own.
- Augustine taught that God has predetermined some people to damnation whose wills He does not allow to turn toward Him, and some to salvation whose wills He does not allow to turn away from Him. For Augustine, election is absolutely gratuitous, and God’s arbitrary will is impervious to foreseen merits and good actions. In short one does not have and choice (free will) to reject God will.
- Augustine was the author of the *Filioque*, (from the Son) which regards the procession of the Holy Spirit in the Nicene Creed. Even after the Second Ecumenical Council determination that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father, Augustine was emphatically teaching: “God the Father is He from Whom the Word is born and from Whom the Holy Spirit principally proceeds. This heresy eventually cut off the West from the Orthodox Church

- Augustine believed and taught the supremacy of Rome and the Pope. “[In] the Roman Church, the supremacy of the Apostolic Chair has always flourished.” (Epistle 43) “Among these [apostles] Peter alone almost everywhere deserved to represent the whole Church. Because of that representation of the Church, which only he bore, he deserved to hear ‘I will give to you the keys of the kingdom of Heaven.’” (Sermon 295 [c. 411 A.D])

In defense of Augustine, he was laboring to combat multiple heresies that were literary destroying the Sacred Tradition of the Church. His writings are brilliant and still looked upon to for guidance and understanding. Regarding the teachings I previously cited he always went to great detail to explain his reasoning and more often than not reconciled his reasoning to the faith of the early church. Regardless these teachings became the seeds that grew into the current doctrines and distinctive of the majority of Catholic as well as the Protestant Groups.

The Narrow Path

As we come to the close of this book, we must truly come to understand the destination we desire to reach. That destination is life eternal in full presence of Our Lord in our resurrected body, and that destination will only be reached when Jesus returns. Until that time, we must be diligent to follow the path laid out for in the Holy Tradition of the Church built on the foundation of the Apostles with Christ the Cornerstone.

There are many obstacles and distractions to overcome. We will be tempted to use our own reasoning to make the path easier to travel. I.e., by self-interpretation we may change or deny the faith passed on to us by the guides appointed by Christ and His Church.

We will be tempted to place material works and gains above Holy Works and Grace. We will be tempted to worship false idols such as money, power, possessions. And we must be wary that even our way of worship does not become an idol. I.e., when the prayer book, the icons, the music, or other parts of the worship become more important than the intent of those things, which is to keep up on the path.

To this lowly servant it is my belief that only the Orthodox and small number of Old and Independent Catholics are the denominations professing and teaching this narrow path which leads to the destination we seek. Remember the old saying, “the devil is in the details” and avoid being guided by the reason of the world and self and instead be guided by the Faith as proclaimed by Christ and His chosen Apostles.

In closing, find below some verses, a Greek word from the Septuagint, and two final questions for your reflection.

And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. (Acts 14: 21,22)

Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, has God said, you shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, You shall not eat of it, neither shall you touch it, lest you die. And the serpent said unto the woman, You shall not surely die: For God does know that in the day you eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and you shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. (Genesis 3:1-5)

πίστις (faith) persuasion, i.e. credence; moral conviction (of religious truth, or the truthfulness of God or a religious teacher), especially reliance upon Christ for salvation; abstractly, constancy in such profession; by extension, the system of religious (Gospel) truth itself: — assurance, belief, believe, faith, fidelity

- Does the word “faith” mean more than to believe?
- When Adam and Eve were tempted by the serpent to eat of the forbidden fruit of knowledge, they had to use their reasoning to decide who to trust. How do we know when having to use our reasoning to make a decision about the faith if we are following Gods plan for our salvation, another’s plan, our or own plan and desires?

May God Bless,

Bishop Michael

APPENDIX:

The purpose of the Appendix is to provide the reader with more information on the topics presented in the main text.

Other Books of the Bible:

Listed below are some, not all, of the ancient writing we know of that were used in Jewish and Christian worship. These books were later not used for various reasons.

Old Testament

The First Book and Second of Adam and Eve	The Odes of Solomon
The Book of the Secrets of Enoch	The Letter of Aristeas
The Psalms of Solomon	Fourth Book of Maccabees
The Odes of Solomon	The Story of Ahikar
Fourth Book of Maccabees	The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs
The Story of Ahikar	Testament of Reuben
The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs	Testament of Simeon
The First Book of Adam and Eve	Testament of Levi
The First Book of Adam and Eve	The Testament of Judah
The Second Book of Adam and Eve	The Testament of Issachar
The Book of the Secrets of Enoch	The Testament of Zebulun
The Psalms of Solomon	The Testament of Dan

New Testament

Gospel According to Peter	The Gospel of Nicodemus
Gospel of Marcion	The Apocalypse of Peter
Gospel of Thomas	The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Laodiceans
Gospel of Mary	The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to Seneca
Gospel of Judas	The Acts of Paul and Thecla
Gospel of Philip	The First and Second Epistles of Clement to the Corinthians
Gospel of the Twelve Apostles	The General Epistle of Barnabas
Gospel of Perfection	The Epistle of Ignatius to the Ephesians
Gospel of the Hebrews	Six Epistles of Ignatius
Gospel of the Nazarenes	The Epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians
Gospel of the Ebionites	The Three Books of the Shepherd of Hermas
Gospel of the Twelve	
Gospel of the Nativity of Mary	
Infancy Gospel of Thomas	

Scripture in the Church Building and Worship

I have often been told by some that the catholic church, in particular the Roman Catholic Church, does not proclaim scripture in the worship. I have also been told many times that object like crucifixes, icons, vestments, and incense were considered “graven images” and forbidden in the ten commandments (Exodus 20:4). Quite often people will select various verses from both the Old and New Testaments and weave them together to justify their reasoning. However, in the books of Acts 2:42, 3:1, 4:1, 5:42) we read how the Apostles and faithful met and worshiped in the Jewish temple. And incense is mentioned numerous times in the scripture. Consider it is the one of gifts the gentile Wisemen / Kings (Mt 2:11) and well as being offered with the prayers of the saints. (Rev 8:4)

Regarding images if you read Exodus 25 through 28 in which God is speaking to Moses regarding how to build a place of worship, His temple, you will find instructions about an ark overlaid with gold, a mercy seat, images of cherubim with wings outstretched facing each other, a table of wood overlaid with gold, dishes, spoons, and bowls made of gold. Shewbread will be always on the table. There is also a lampstand with branches, knobs, and flowers on it, and seven more lamps. There is a tabernacle, a curtain of fine linens, a veil of twined linens and more. You will also read about the vestments described for the chosen priests.

So, either God is asking His people to break the commandment He gave previously, or some people are misinterpreting what they read. Once again, the answer of interpretation rests in Holy Tradition.

Scripture in the Mass:

Introductory Rites:

Sign of the Cross:

"In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." (Matt 28:19; cf. John 14:13-14; Acts 2:21)

Prayers concluded by "Amen" (Neh 8:6; Ps 41:13; Rom 16:27; Heb 13:20-21; Rev 7:16)

Liturgical Greeting:

"The Lord be with you." (2 Tim 4:22; cf. Matt 1:23; 28:20)

People's Response: "And with your spirit." (cf. Gal 6:18; 2 Tim 4:22)

Rite of Blessing and Sprinkling Holy Water (see Ezek 36:25; cf. Num 8:7a)

Penitential Act:

Intro: "Let us acknowledge our sins, and so prepare ourselves to celebrate the sacred mysteries."
(cf. Ps 51:5)

Confiteor: "I confess to almighty God..." (cf. Lev 5:5; Neh 1:5-9; Dan 9:3-19; James 5:16)

"Have mercy on us, O Lord. / For we have sinned against you. / Show us, O Lord, your mercy. /
And grant us your salvation." (Ps 41:4)

Kyrie Eleison: "Lord, Have Mercy." (Matt 15:22; 17:15; 20:30-31; cf. Ps 123:3)

Glory to God (Gloria):

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of good will." (Luke 2:14; cf. Rev 4:11)

"We praise you; we bless you, we adore you, we glorify you..." (cf. Ps 148:13; cf. Rev 5:11-14)

"Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son..." (cf. Ps 2:7; John 1:14, 18)

"Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, you take away the sins of the world..." (cf. John 1:29,
36)etc.

Liturgy of the Word:

Introductory/Concluding Dialogues:

"A reading from the book/letter of..." (cf. Neh 8:1-8; Jer 36:8; Acts 13:15; 1 Tim 4:13)

"The Word of the Lord" (1 Peter 1:25) - "Thanks be to God" (Rom 6:17; 2 Cor 9:15)

"A reading from the holy Gospel according to..." - "Glory to you, O Lord"

"The Gospel of the Lord" (Rom 16:25; Mark 1:1, 14-15) - "Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ"

Acclamations before the Gospel:

"Alleluia" (many Psalms, esp. Ps 146-150; Rev 19:1-6)

"Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ, King of endless glory!" (cf. Ps 24:7-10; 1 Thess 2:12; 2 Tim 4:18)

"Praise and honor to you, Lord Jesus Christ!" (cf. Dan 4:34, 37; 1 Peter 1:7)

"Glory and praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ!" (cf. Phil 1:11)

Profession of Faith (Credo):

"I believe..." (Mark 9:24; John 11:27; cf. John 14:1; 1 John 5:10)

General Intercessions:

"We pray to the Lord." (Exod 8:29-30; 10:17-18; Jer 42:2-4; Acts 8:22-24)

"Lord, hear our prayer." (2 Kings 20:2-5; Isa 38:2-5)

Liturgy of the Eucharist:

Preparation of the Gifts:

"Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation..." (cf. 1 Chron 29:10; Ps 72:18-19; 119:10; Luke 1:68)

"Blessed be God forever." (cf. Gen 14:20; Ps 66:20; 68:35)

Eucharistic Acclamations:

Sanctus: "Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of hosts..." (Isa 6:3; Rev 4:8)

"Heaven and earth are full of your glory." (cf. Hab 3:3; Ps 19:1; 57:5; 1 Cor 15:40-41)

Benedictus: "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord." (Ps 118:26; Mark 11:9; Matt 21:9; Luke 19:38; John 12:13)

"Hosanna in the highest" (Mark 11:10; Matt 21:9; cf. Luke 19:38)

Words of Institution:

(see Mark 14:22-24; Matt 26:26-28; cf. Luke 22:17-20; 1 Cor 11:23-25)

"Take this, all of you, and eat of it, for this is my Body, which will be given up for you." (a combination of Mark 14:22; Matt 26:26; Luke 22:19; 1 Cor 11:24)

"Take this, all of you, and drink from it, for this is the chalice of my Blood, the Blood of the new and eternal covenant, which will be poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins." (a combination of Mark 14:24; Matt 26:27b-28; cf. Luke 22:17, 20; 1 Cor 11:25)

"Do this in remembrance of me." (only Luke 22:19; 1 Cor 11:24a, 25b)

Memorial Acclamations:

"We proclaim your Death, O Lord, and profess your Resurrection until you come again." (cf. 1 Cor 16:22)

"When we eat this Bread and drink this Cup, we proclaim your Death, O Lord, until you come again." (cf. 1 Cor 11:26)

"Save us, Savior of the world, for by your Cross and Resurrection you have set us free." (cf. Matt 8:25; Luke 4:42; Rom 8:21)

Lord's Prayer (Pater Noster):

"Our Father in heaven..." (Matt 6:9-13; cf. Luke 11:2-4; Mark 14:36; Gal 4:6)

Embolism: "Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil... as we await the blessed hope and the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ." (Titus 2:13)

Doxology: "For the kingdom, power, and the glory are yours..."

(found only in some biblical manuscripts after Matt 6:13; cf. Rev 4:11; 11:15; 1 Chron 29:11)

Greeting of Peace (Pax Domini):

"Lord Jesus Christ, you said to your apostles, 'I leave you peace, my peace I give you.'" (John 14:27)

"The peace of the Lord be with you always." (cf. John 16:33; 20:19, 21, 26)

Breaking of the Bread (Agnus Dei):

"Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world..." (cf. John 1:29, 36; Rev 5:6-13; 22:1-3)

Preparation before Communion:

"Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb." (John 1:29, 36; Rev 19:9)

"Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed." (Matt 8:8; cf. Luke 7:1-10)

Concluding Rites:

Final Blessing (cf. Gen 28:3; Deut 14:29; Num 6:23-27; Ps 29:11)

Dismissal (Latin *Ite, missa est* = "Go, you are sent/missioned"):

"Go forth, the Mass is ended."

"Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord." (cf. Mark 16:15)

"Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life." (cf. Ps 115:1; 1 Cor 10:31; 2 Thess 1:12)

"Go in peace." (cf. Exod 4:18; Deut 10:11-13; Judg 18:6; 1 Sam 1:17; Mark 5:34; Luke 7:50; 8:48)

Sacraments in Scripture

The unity between the sacraments and Scripture is both clearly presented and part of the mystery of faith. That is not surprising, since the Latin word for "mystery" is sometimes translated "sacramentum," and Eastern Christians continue to call the sacraments "the mysteries." Knowing where the sacraments originate in Scripture, however, enables us to enter into these "mysteries" more completely and unite ourselves more fully with our Lord.

Baptism

Baptism was considered the first and foundational sacrament for the early Church. References can be found throughout the New Testament, including Matthew 3:16; 28:19; Mark 1:8, 16:16;

John 3:5; Acts 1:4-5; 2:38; 8:16; 8:36-38; 11:16; 22:16; Romans 6:3-4; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 5:25-26; Colossians 2:12; and 1 Peter 3:20-21.

Confirmation

The first mention of the completion of baptism by the coming of the Holy Spirit is the account of Pentecost in Acts 2. Acts 19:3-6 makes it clear that baptism and confirmation are two separate, sacramental signs. In Hebrews 6:2, baptism and laying on of hands (confirmation) are seen as separate as well. Other Scriptures referencing confirmation include John 14:16; and Acts 8:14-17; 19:3-6.

Eucharist

The Eucharist was clearly established in the Last Supper, as recounted in Matthew 26:26-29. Additional references to the Breaking of the Bread can be found in Luke 24:35; Acts 2:42; and 1 Corinthians 11:24-27.

Penance / Reconciliation

Jesus gave the authority to forgive sin to the apostles (see Matthew 16:19 and John 20:21-23). We believe this authority has been passed down through bishops and priests to the present day as part of the power to “bind and loosen.”

Anointing of the Sick

Healing the sick was a vital part of Jesus’ ministry, and it was carried on by his disciples after his Resurrection. The specific call for anointing is spelled out in James 5:13-15, calling for prayers by the elders and anointing with oil for the sick.

Holy Orders

Jesus instituted the sacrament of holy orders at the Last Supper when he commissioned his apostles by saying, “Do this in remembrance of me” (Luke 22:19). In the rest of the New Testament, we can see the pattern of passing down this authority and responsibility. Some of the passages that relate to holy orders include Acts 6:3-6; 13:2-3; and 1 Timothy 3:1; 3:8-9; 4:16; 5:17-19; 5:22.

Matrimony

Jesus' first miracle was performed at the wedding feast of Cana (see John 2:1-11), indicating the importance of marriage. Through both the Old and the New Testament, the relationship between God and his people is often described in marital terms. In the New Testament, some of the

Scriptures that show matrimony to be a sign of Christ and the Church, as well as a special bond between man and woman, are Matthew 19:10-11 and Ephesians 5:31-32.

Old Catholic Distinctives from the Founders

The Declaration of Utrecht, 1889

We adhere faithfully to the Rule of Faith laid down by St. Vincent of Lerins in these terms: "Id teneamus, quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus creditum est; hoc est etenim vere proprieque catholicum." For this reason, we preserve in professing the faith of the primitive Church, as formulated in the oecumenical symbols and specified precisely by the unanimously accepted decisions of the Oecumenical Councils held in the undivided Church of the first thousand years.

We therefore reject the decrees of the so-called Council of the Vatican, which were promulgated July 18th, 1870, concerning the infallibility and the universal Episcopate of the Bishop of Rome, decrees which are in contradiction with the faith of the ancient Church, and which destroy its ancient canonical constitution by attributing to the Pope the plenitude of ecclesiastical powers over all Dioceses and over all the faithful. By denial of this primatial jurisdiction we do not wish to deny the historical primacy which several Oecumenical Councils and Fathers of the ancient Church have attributed to the Bishop of Rome by recognizing him as the Primus inter pares. We also reject the dogma of the Immaculate Conception promulgated by Pius IX in 1854 in defiance of the Holy Scriptures and in contradiction to the tradition of the centuries.

As for other Encyclicals published by the Bishops of Rome in recent times for example, the Bulls Unigenitus and Auctorem fidei, and the Syllabus of 1864, we reject them on all such points as are in contradiction with the doctrine of the primitive Church, and we do not recognize them as binding on the consciences of the faithful. We also renew the ancient protests of the Catholic Church of Holland against the errors of the Roman Curia, and against its attacks upon the rights of national Churches.

We refuse to accept the decrees of the Council of Trent in matters of discipline, and as for the dogmatic decisions of that Council we accept them only so far as they are in harmony with the teaching of the primitive Church.

Considering that the Holy Eucharist has always been the true central point of Catholic worship, we consider it our right to declare that we maintain with perfect fidelity the ancient Catholic doctrine concerning the Sacrament of the Altar, by believing that we receive the Body and Blood of our Saviour Jesus Christ under the species of bread and wine. The Eucharistic celebration in the Church is neither a continual repetition nor a renewal of the expiatory sacrifice which Jesus offered once for all upon the Cross: but it is a sacrifice because it is the perpetual commemoration of the sacrifice offered upon the Cross, and it is the act by which we represent upon earth and appropriate to ourselves the one offering which Jesus Christ makes in Heaven, according to the Epistle to the Hebrews 9:11-12, for the salvation of redeemed humanity, by appearing for us in the presence of God (Heb. 9:24). The character of the Holy Eucharist, being thus understood, it is, at the same time, a sacrificial feast, by means of which the faithful in receiving the Body and Blood of our Saviour, enter into communion with one another (I Cor. 10:17).

We hope that Catholic theologians, in maintaining the faith of the undivided Church, will succeed in establishing an agreement upon questions which have been controverted ever since the divisions which arose between the Churches. We exhort the priests under our jurisdiction to teach, both by preaching and by the instruction of the young, especially the essential Christian truths professed by all the Christian confessions, to avoid, in discussing controverted doctrines, any violation of truth or charity, and in word and deed to set an example to the members.

By maintaining and professing faithfully the doctrine of Jesus Christ, by refusing to admit those errors which by the fault of men have crept into the Catholic Church, by laying aside the abuses in ecclesiastical matters, together with the worldly tendencies of the hierarchy, we believe that we shall be able to combat efficaciously the great evils of our day, which are unbelief and indifference in matters of religion.

Utrecht, 24th September 1889 - +Heykamp- +Rinkel - +Diependaal - +Reinkens --+Herzog

Relations Between the Orthodox and Old Catholic Churches

Below are excerpts from:

The Christian East, 1932, 13:3, 4; pp 91-98

PROCEEDINGS OF THE CONFERENCES BETWEEN THE OLD CATHOLIC AND ORTHODOX CHURCHES, HELD AT BONN, ON OCTOBER 27TH AND 28TH, 1931.

What are the fundamental documents for Old Catholic teaching?

In reply the Conference was referred to the Declaration of Utrecht, put out by the Old Catholic Bishops on September 24th, 1889, to the Old Catholic Catechisms and to their liturgical books, which were laid before the members present to form the basis of the discussions. This discussion started from the first article of the Declaration of Utrecht. The conclusion was that all the seven Councils are to be accepted. Because, however, sometimes only the first four Oecumenical Councils are regarded as important--while the others are regarded as secondary on account of the lesser importance of the subjects treated at them--the Old Catholics accordingly added in the first article the No. 7 to the phrase "Oecumenical Councils." Similarly, the decisions of Local Councils are recognized as of equal force by the Old Catholics if their decisions subsequently obtained the confirmation of Oecumenical Councils. In the discussion on Creeds, it was acknowledged unanimously that the official Creed is that of Nikaea-Constantinople (without the addition), but that besides this there is--as a baptismal Creed--the so-called Apostles' Creed, which is in use in the West.

The Metropolitan Germanos brought forward the question of the Filioque.

Archbishop Kenninck stated that in the Old Catholic Church of Holland it had been deleted, and Bishop Moog said the same for the Christian Catholic Church of Switzerland. Tradition is the explanation and completion of Holy Scripture, through the unanimous and written tradition of the Ancient Church. (See *Old Catholic Catechism*, p. 39; also *Inter. Kirch. Zeitschrift*, No. 3, July-September 1931, p. 156).

Question about the Canon of Holy Scripture.

Both the proto-canonical and the deutero-canonical books--the latter in particular as edifying books, profitable for reading--are recognized as forming part of Holy Scripture; the latter consequently are not regarded as apocryphal.

Question about Canons. Does the Old Catholic Church recognize the Canons of the Seven Oecumenical Councils?

The Archbishop Kenninck replied, "Certainly, so long as they are not interpreted according to the letter, but in the spirit of the Ancient Church." The Metropolitan Germanos emphasized the fact that each autocephalous Church can add new regulations which have the force of law to these canons, so long as they are not in opposition to the canons. A new codification would be made in accordance with the Pro-Synod on Mt. Athos, but the old canons would remain in force so far as they bear on the present-day life of the Church. The Archbishop of Triikka pointed out further,

"These canons have become inapplicable, not because they are opposed to Holy Scripture and tradition, but on account of human weakness (for instance, the question of attendance at church)." To the question of the Archbishop of Bukowina, whether the canons of the Roman Church are held binding, a negative answer was given. So, it was shown that there was agreement, too, as to the recognition of the ancient canons.

Question about the Marriage of the Clergy.

After a long discussion, the views of the Orthodox and Old Catholic Churches were defined as follows: "The Orthodox Church permits marriage only before ordination. Bishops must be unmarried and are therefore chosen from the unmarried or widowed clergy or from the monks. The Old Catholic Church permits marriage both after ordination and not only to priests but also to bishops. The whole question is regarded as a matter of indifference.

Question: What do the Old Catholic and Orthodox Churches think about the so-called "customs and usages"?

Answer: The local church can use customs of its own, if these are not opposed to catholic ecclesiastical decrees or injurious to them (for instance, in Confirmation, laying on of hands is the practice in the Old Catholic Church and anointing with chrism in the Orthodox Church).

Question: On the meaning of the word "Church"?

Reply: The Church as guardian of faith and morals has authority over the faithful. "The Church, therefore, is to be interpreted as being above Scripture and not Scripture above the Church."

Archbishop Kenninck emphasized especially, "As God is our Father, so the Church is our Mother," and recalled the words of St. Augustine, "I should not have believed if the Church had not taught me the Gospel." But the Church must teach on the basis of Scripture and tradition, "what has been believed always, everywhere and by all." The Oecumenical Councils decide authoritatively concerning the teaching of the Church, but the Church is not justified in declaring new doctrines, not based on Scripture and tradition.

So, on this point also full agreement was shown between the Orthodox and Old Catholic Churches. On the question as to whether a local council was justified in altering customs settled by an Oecumenical Council, or whether only an Oecumenical Council could attempt this change or sanction it subsequently, no decision was reached. The Orthodox Church declared in the negative.

There was agreement as to the second and third Articles of the Declaration of Utrecht and in general as to Articles 4 and 5, the historical importance of which was explained by Archbishop Kenninck.

No other Council is recognized as Oecumenical beyond the seven Oecumenical Councils. The really catholic dogmas of the Synod of Trent are of force in the Old Catholic Church also, so far as they are in agreement with the ancient teaching of the Church.

How does the Old Catholic Church understand the term "Sacrament"?

The No. 7 was recognized as the number of the Sacraments without any disagreement; special stress being laid on Baptism as effecting entrance into the Church and the Holy Eucharist as the center and the means of grace which unites all Christians. Holy Order is not only an appointment to an office, but the imparting of a divine charisma, such as is imparted also by the other sacraments (mysteries).

(1) Baptism. --There is a difference here as to form.

In the Orthodox Church there is triple immersion, in the Old Catholic Church, affusion, which is also used in the Orthodox Church in case of necessity. As to the rest there is agreement. (This means Old Catholics agree with Ancestral Sin and not the Roman teaching of original sin. This is the basis for providing communion to all, including infants and children, who are regenerated (born again) into the Body of Christ - +MN)

(2) Confirmation. --In the Orthodox Church this follows immediately after Baptism, being conferred by the priest with chrism which has been consecrated by bishops. The Orthodox Church holds it necessary for chrism to follow Baptism, as being indispensable for the inner growth of the Christian life. The Old Catholic Church administers it after previous teaching, and she regards chrism (Confirmation) as desirable. In any case as necessary before ordination, but not for the reception of Holy Communion.

(3) The Eucharist. Both Churches were agreed as to the change of the bread and wine, only in the Old Catholic Churches the epiclesis precedes the words of institution of the Sacrament and in the Orthodox Church, it follows them, since in the view of the Orthodox Church the whole liturgy is a representation of the life of Christ. The Eucharist is offered as a sacrifice on behalf of the living and the dead. Bishop Kury also said that in Switzerland, Old Catholic clergy give the Holy Eucharist in cases of necessity to members of the Orthodox Church if they express a desire for it.

Administration in the West is under one kind, but under both kinds if desired. In the Old Catholic Church, it is with unleavened bread, in the Orthodox Church, with leavened bread.

Question about Confession. --In the Old Catholic Church compulsory private confession is abolished, but every opportunity is given for voluntary confession. In the Orthodox Church confession is necessary before the reception of the Holy Eucharist. The so-called penances in the Orthodox Church are means for the improvement of sinners, which the priest imposes on those who come to confession.

Prayer Oil (Unction). --There was complete agreement here.

Eschatology. --The teaching about purgatorial fire is also rejected by the Old Catholic Church. We pray, invoking the mercy of God on behalf of the dead; everything else is a mystery.

Veneration. --The teaching about the "intercession of the Saints is accepted and their veneration is recognized, especially the honour to the Mother of God, which is particularly emphasized in the liturgy. The abuses in honoring the saints which are found in the Roman Church are rejected. In regard to the "holy ikons and relics," both the Churches recognize the honour due to them, so far as this, however, refers not to the material, but to the person represented thereon, as Basil the Great and the 7th Oecumenical Council insisted. The form of paying honour varies. In the Old Catholic Church there are statues of saints, but not in the Orthodox. Likewise, the offering of lighted candles in their honour is permitted, and at the consecration of churches holy relics are deposited. The morning session was concluded at 1 p.m. with prayer; the next session began at 3 p.m.

The Metropolitan Theodosius asked what the Old Catholic Church thought about fasting? Fridays and the Great Lent are fasting days in the Old Catholic Church.

How is the fast kept? There is a difference made in food according to the season and circumstances. Sermons are preached in the Church on the Passion of Christ. There is no fixed rule, but naturally the great week is observed with special solemnity.

The Bishop of Novi-Sad, Irenay: How does the Old Catholic Church regard the Apostolic Succession? Archbishop Kenninck: All Old Catholic Church doctrine maintains the Apostolic Succession.

The Metropolitan Nectaries Desired Sacramental Communion because there are no dogmatic hindrances. He would propose this to his Synod and recommend its acceptance.

The Church Councils

Timeline of events preceding the First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea

30 - 33 AD - Ministry of Christ

- Death on the Cross

- Christ's Resurrection after three days on the Cross
- Ascension, forty days after the Resurrection
- Pentecost, fifty days after the Resurrection

33 or 34 AD

- The First Convention - The Apostles meet to discuss who should take the place of Judas. Mathias was selected. (Acts chapter 1)

35- 58 AD

- The Second Convention - The Apostles meet to discuss believers who would sell their possessions and give the moneys to the Apostles for the ministries. (Acts 4:31-37)
- The Third Convention - The Apostles meet to discuss which deacons should be selected to serve at the table. (Acts 6:2)
- The Fourth Convention - The Apostles meet after Peter had baptized the heathen Cornelius and his family. (Acts 11:2-3)
- The Fifth Convention - This is considered to be the first general council of the Church. Acts 15 explains that the Apostles met to discuss the matter as to what extent gentile converts should be subject to the law of Moses (i.e., circumcision,). The apostles and the elders of the Church met and decided after much prayer and debate that these are the necessary things for gentiles: "that [they] abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols, and from the blood of what is strangled and from unchastity." (Acts 15:29)
- The Sixth Convention met - "when all of the elders were present." (Acts 21:18)

First Ecumenical Council - Nicea, Asia Minor, 325 A.D

St. Hilary of Poitiers documented that some 318 bishops of the Church were in attendance (other numbers are Eusebius 250, Eustathius of Antioch 270, and Athanasius about 300, Gelasius of Cyzicus at more than 300). Most representatives were from Asia, Pontus, and Syro-Phoenicia although legates did travel from Rome and throughout other regions of the Empire. The work of the Council ended on August 25 of that same year. In the extant lists of bishops present, Ossius

of Cordova, and the presbyters Vitus and Vincentius are listed before the other names, but it is more likely that Eustathius of Antioch or Alexander of Alexandria presided.

The Arian Controversy

Arius, a priest at the church of Baucalis, came into open conflict with his bishop, Alexander of Alexandria, concerning the divinity of Christ. Arius reasoned and taught that if Jesus was born, then there was time when He did not exist. If He became God, then there was time when He was not. Therefore, Arius reasoned that Jesus must be understood as inferior to the Father. The effect of making Christ less than God renders impossible our human deification (to become like God). Only if Christ is both God and man can humanity be united with God. For none but God himself can open to humans the way of union. The Council therefore declared Arius' teaching a heresy, unacceptable to the Church and decreed that Christ is God. He is of the same essence "homoousios" with God the Father.

Tasks of the Council

- The primary task of this council was to make the Trinitarian doctrine of the Church very precise to avoid future debate. The document produced was the Nicene Creed. The key word in this Nicene symbol is the term "consubstantial," used to indicate the relationship between the Father and the Son.
- The Council dealt with the visible organization of the Church. It singled out for mention the three great centers of Christianity: Rome, Alexandria, and Antioch. The see of Jerusalem, while remaining subject to the Metropolitan of Caesarea, was given the next place of honor after these three. (Constantinople was declared the New Rome five years later).
- A Date for Pascha (Easter) - The Council decided that three principles should guide the Church in determining when Pascha is to be celebrated: (1) the feast must be celebrated on the same Sunday by all churches. (2) It must take into consideration the full moon that follows the vernal equinox. (3) The Eastern Churches who followed the Jews in calculating the date of Pascha had to abandon their practices.
- The first parts of the seven articles of the Creed were ratified at the First Ecumenical Council. The text reads as follows:

We believe in one God. The Father Almighty. Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the only begotten, begotten of the Father before all ages. Light of Light; true God of true God; begotten not made; of one essence [CONSUBSTANTIAL, Gr. Homoousion] with the Father, by whom all things were made; who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and became man. And He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered, and was buried. And the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures; and ascended into

heaven and sits at the right hand of the Father; and he shall come again with glory to judge the living and the dead; whose Kingdom shall have no end.

The Twenty Authentic Canons of the Council of Nicaea

- The conditions of ordination - 1,2, 9, & 10
- Hierarchical structures - 4,5,6, & 7
- The life and status of clerics - 3,15,16, & 17
- The penance and reconciliation of lapsed Christians - 11,12,13, & 14
- The ways to admit dissidents - 8 & 9
- Liturgical discipline - 18 & 20

Second Ecumenical Council - Constantinople, 381 A.D

This Council was opened to:

- Take up the work of the first Council, expanding and adapting the Nicæan Creed.
- Develop in particular the teachings concerning the Holy Spirit.
- Condemn the blasphemy of Macedius who declared that the Son created the Holy Spirit.
- Strike down the works of Apollinarius, the Eunomians, the Marcellians, the Photians, and every other heresy that had arisen under the rules of the emperors Constantius, of Julian, and of Valens.

The Macedonian Controversy

Macedonius, somewhat like Arius, was misinterpreting the Church's teaching on the Holy Spirit. He taught that the Holy Spirit was not a person ("hypostasis"), but simply a power ("dynamic") of God. Therefore, the Spirit was inferior to the Father and the Son. The Council condemned Macedonius' teaching and defined the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. The Council decreed that there was one God in three persons ("hypostases"): Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The Creed

The holy fathers of the Council added five articles to the Creed. They read as follows:

And (We believe) in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of Life, who proceeds from the Father: who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified: who spoke by the prophets. In one Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins. I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Third Ecumenical Council - Ephesus, Asia Minor, 431A.D.

- This council full of controversy and condemnation affirmed that:
- Jesus Christ possesses two natures, divine and human, at the time of His incarnation.
- The Church confesses Jesus Christ as both True God and True Man
- The Church confesses the Virgin Mary as Theotokos, the bearer of God.
- The text of the "Creed" decreed at the First and Second Ecumenical Councils was deemed complete, and the Council forbade any changes (additions or deletions).

Fourth Ecumenical Council - Chalcedon, Asia Minor, 451A.D

The Fourth Great & Holy Council was convoked in Chalcedon, a city of Bithynia in Asia Minor on October 8th, 451 under the Emperor Marcian. The Council closed on November 1st with six hundred to six hundred and thirty bishops present.

The Tasks of this Council

- Assert the Orthodox doctrine against the heresy of Eutyches and the Monophysites, Address issues of ecclesiastical discipline and jurisdiction.

Fifth Ecumenical Council - Constantinople II, 553 A.D

The Fifth Great & Holy Council was convoked by the Emperor Justinian the Great in the year 553 in the capital city of the Byzantine Empire, Constantinople. This synod was opened on May 5th in the Secretarium of the Cathedral Church of Agia Sophia. Among those present were the Patriarchs, Eutychius of Constantinople, who presided, Apollinaris of Alexandria, Domnus of Antioch, three bishops as representatives of the Patriarch Eustochius of Jerusalem, and 145 other metropolitans and bishops (164 in total). This Council concluded its work on June 2nd after eight sessions.

The Task of the Council

- The Council was called in hope of putting an end to the Nestorian and the Monophysite controversies.

The Nestorian Controversy

Nestorius, bishop of Constantinople, proposed that the Virgin Mary gave birth to a man, Jesus Christ, not God, the "Logos" ("The Word," Son of God). He reasoned that the Logos only dwelled in Christ, as in a Temple (Christ, therefore, was only Theophoros: The "Bearer of God"). Consequently, the Virgin Mary should be called "Christotokos," "Mother of Christ" and not

"Theotokos," "Mother of God." See the Third Council for the history of the events surrounding this controversy.

The Monophysite Controversy

Eutyches, the archimandrite, in his efforts to maintain a physical unity in Christ held that the two natures in Christ, the Divine and the human, were so intimately united that they became physically one, inasmuch as the human nature was completely absorbed by the Divine. Thus resulted one Christ not only with one personality but also with one nature. See the Fourth Council for the history of the events surrounding this controversy.

This Second Council of Constantinople:

- confirmed the Church's teaching regarding the two natures of Christ (human and divine).
- condemned certain writings with Nestorian leanings.

The Sixth Great & Holy Council - The Third Council of Constantinople, 680

The Sixth Ecumenical Council was convoked in the year 680 under the Emperor Constantine IV (668-685) in the capital city of Constantinople (it is also known as the Third Council of Constantinople). The Emperor presided over the council, but he followed the tradition established at the Fourth Ecumenical Council. He attended to external matters, the administration of the synod etc. He left the decisions to the Synod alone.

The synod was opened on November 7, 680 and closed after eighteen sessions on September 16, 681. It is believed that three hundred bishops attended, although only 174 bishops signed the decree at its close. The numbers varied as bishops and theologians came and left the council.

The Task of the Council

This council was convoked to address the compromise sought between the Emperor Heraclius and Patriarch Sergius of Constantinople with the Monophysites earlier this century. This Third Council of Constantinople reconfirmed the Definition of Chalcedon dealing with the question of whether the two natures of Jesus Christ (God and man) had two separate wills.

The Council decreed that:

Christ had two natures with two activities: as God working miracles, rising from the dead and ascending into heaven; as Man, performing the ordinary acts of daily life. Each nature exercises its own free will. Christ's divine nature had a specific task to perform and so did His human nature. Each nature performed those tasks set forth without being confused, subjected to any change or working against each other. The two distinct natures and related to them activities were mystically united in the one Divine Person of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

The Seventh Great and Holy Council – The Second Council of Nicea, 787

Here the veneration was defined due to holy images, that we give honor only to those they represent and not to the image itself as such; it presented the answer to the image breakers or iconoclasts. It also gave twenty-two canons regarding the clergy.

Anathemas of the Ecumenical Councils

Third Ecumenical Council

- 1 If anyone does not confess that Emmanuel is God in truth, and therefore that the holy virgin is the mother of God (for she bore in a fleshly way the Word of God become flesh, let him be anathema.
- 2 If anyone does not confess that the Word from God the Father has been united by hypostasis with the flesh and is one Christ with his own flesh, and is therefore God and man together, let him be anathema.
- 3 If anyone divides in the one Christ the hypostases after the union, joining them only by a conjunction of dignity or authority or power, and not rather by a coming together in a union by nature, let him be anathema.
- 4 If anyone distributes between the two persons or hypostases the expressions used either in the gospels or in the apostolic writings, whether they are used by the holy writers of Christ or by him about himself, and ascribes some to him as to a man, thought of separately from the Word from God, and others, as befitting God, to him as to the Word from God the Father, let him be anathema.
- 5 If anyone dares to say that Christ was a God-bearing man and not rather God in truth, being by nature one Son, even as "the Word became flesh", and is made partaker of blood and flesh precisely like us, let him be anathema.

- 6 If anyone says that the Word from God the Father was the God or master of Christ and does not rather confess the same both God and man, the Word having become flesh, according to the scriptures, let him be anathema.
- 7 If anyone says that as man Jesus was activated by the Word of God and was clothed with the glory of the Only-begotten, as a being separate from him, let him be anathema.
- 8 If anyone dares to say that the man who was assumed ought to be worshipped and glorified together with the divine Word and be called God along with him, while being separate from him, (for the addition of "with" must always compel us to think in this way), and will not rather worship Emmanuel with one veneration and send up to him one doxology, even as "the Word became flesh", let him be anathema.
- 9 If anyone says that the one Lord Jesus Christ was glorified by the Spirit, as making use of an alien power that worked through him and as having received from him the power to master unclean spirits and to work divine wonders among people, and does not rather say that it was his own proper Spirit through whom he worked the divine wonders, let him be anathema.
- 10 The divine scripture says Christ became "the high priest and apostle of our confession"; he offered himself to God the Father in an odour of sweetness for our sake. If anyone, therefore, says that it was not the very Word from God who became our high priest and apostle, when he became flesh and a man like us, but as it were another who was separate from him, in particular a man from a woman, or if anyone says that he offered the sacrifice also for himself and not rather for us alone (for he who knew no sin needed no offering), let him be anathema.
- 11 If anyone does not confess that the flesh of the Lord is life-giving and belongs to the Word from God the Father, but maintains that it belongs to another besides him, united with him in dignity or as enjoying a mere divine indwelling, and is not rather life-giving, as we said, since it became the flesh belonging to the Word who has power to bring all things to life, let him be anathema.
- 12 If anyone does not confess that the Word of God suffered in the flesh and was crucified in the flesh and tasted death in the flesh and became the first born of the dead, although as God he is life and life-giving, let him be anathema.

Fourth Ecumenical Council

Definition of faith:

The sacred and great and universal synod by God's grace and by decree of your most religious and Christ-loving emperors Valentinian Augustus and Marcian Augustus assembled in Chalcedon, metropolis of the province of Bithynia, in the shrine of the saintly and triumphant martyr Euphemia, issues the following decrees.

In establishing his disciples in the knowledge of the faith, our lord and savior Christ said: “My peace I give you, my peace I leave to you”, so that no one should disagree with his neighbour regarding religious doctrines but that the proclamation of the truth would be uniformly presented. But the evil one never stops trying to smother the seeds of religion with his own tares and is forever inventing some novelty or other against the truth; so the Master, exercising his usual care for the human race, roused this religious and most faithful emperor to zealous action, and summoned to himself the leaders of the priesthood from everywhere, so that through the working of the grace of Christ, the master of all of us, every injurious falsehood might be staved off from the sheep of Christ and they might be fattened on fresh growths of the truth.

This is in fact what we have done. We have driven off erroneous doctrines by our collective resolution, and we have renewed the unerring creed of the fathers. We have proclaimed to all the creed of the 318; and we have made our own those fathers who accepted this agreed statement of religion — the 150 who later met in great Constantinople and themselves set their seal to the same creed.

Therefore, whilst we also stand by the decisions and all the formulas relating to the creed from the sacred synod which took place formerly at Ephesus, whose leaders of most holy memory were Celestine of Rome and Cyril of Alexandria we decree that pre-eminence belongs to the exposition of the right and spotless creed of the 318 saintly and blessed fathers who were assembled at Nicaea when Constantine of pious memory was emperor: and that those decrees also remain in force which were issued in Constantinople by the 150 holy fathers in order to destroy the heresies then rife and to confirm this same catholic and apostolic creed.

The creed of the 318 fathers at Nicaea. And the same of the 150 saintly fathers assembled in Constantinople. This wise and saving creed, the gift of divine grace, was sufficient for a perfect understanding and establishment of religion. For its teaching about the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit is complete, and it sets out the Lord’s becoming human to those who faithfully accept it.

But there are those who are trying to ruin the proclamation of the truth, and through their private heresies they have spawned novel formulas: some by daring to corrupt the mystery of the Lord’s economy on our behalf, and refusing to apply the word “God-bearer” to the Virgin; and others by introducing a confusion and mixture, and mindlessly imagining that there is a single nature of the flesh and the divinity, and fantastically supposing that in the confusion the divine nature of the Only-begotten is possible. Therefore, this sacred and great and universal synod, now in session, in its desire to exclude all their tricks against the truth, and teaching what has been unshakeable in the proclamation from the beginning, decrees that the creed of the 318 fathers is, above all else, to remain inviolate. And because of those who oppose the Holy Spirit, it ratifies

the teaching about the being of the Holy Spirit handed down by the 150 saintly fathers who met some time later in the imperial city — the teaching they made known to all, not introducing anything left out by their predecessors, but clarifying their ideas about the Holy Spirit by the use of scriptural testimonies against those who were trying to do away with his sovereignty. And because of those who are attempting to corrupt the mystery of the economy and are shamelessly and foolishly asserting that he who was born of the holy virgin Mary was a mere man, it has accepted the synodical letters of the blessed Cyril, [already accepted by the Council of Ephesus]pastor of the church in Alexandria, to Nestorius and to the Orientals, as being well-suited to refuting Nestorius’s mad folly and to providing an interpretation for those who in their religious zeal might desire understanding of the saving creed. To these it has suitably added, against false believers and for the establishment of orthodox doctrines the letter of the primate of greatest and older Rome, the most blessed and most saintly Archbishop Leo, written to the sainted Archbishop Flavian to put down Eutyches’s evil-mindedness, because it is in agreement with great Peter’s confession and represents a support we have in common. It is opposed to those who attempt to tear apart the mystery of the economy into a duality of sons; and it expels from the assembly of the priests those who dare to say that the divinity of the Only-begotten is passible, and it stands opposed to those who imagine a mixture or confusion between the two natures of Christ; and it expels those who have the mad idea that the servant-form he took from us is of a heavenly or some other kind of being; and it **anathematizes** those who concoct two natures of the Lord before the union but imagine a single one after the union.

So, following the saintly fathers, we all with one voice teach the confession of one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ: the same perfect in divinity and perfect in humanity, the same truly God and truly man, of a rational soul and a body; consubstantial with the Father as regards his divinity, and the same consubstantial with us as regards his humanity; like us in all respects except for sin; begotten before the ages from the Father as regards his divinity, and in the last days the same for us and for our salvation from Mary, the virgin God-bearer as regards his humanity; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, only-begotten, acknowledged in two natures which undergo no confusion, no change, no division, no separation; at no point was the difference between the natures taken away through the union, but rather the property of both natures is preserved and comes together into a single person and a single subsistent being; he is not parted or divided into two persons, but is one and the same only-begotten Son, God, Word, Lord Jesus Christ, just as the prophets taught from the beginning about him, and as the Lord Jesus Christ himself instructed us, and as the creed of the fathers handed it down to us.

Since we have formulated these things with all possible accuracy and attention, the sacred and universal synod decreed that no one is permitted to produce, or even to write down or compose, any other creed or to think or teach otherwise. As for those who dare either to compose another creed or even to promulgate or teach or hand down another creed for those who wish to convert to a recognition of the truth from Hellenism or from Judaism, or from any kind of heresy at all: if

they be bishops or clerics, the bishops are to be deposed from the episcopacy and the clerics from the clergy; if they be monks or layfolk, they are to be **anathematized**.

Fifth Ecumenical Council -

- 1 If anyone will not confess that the Father, Son, and holy Spirit have one nature or substance, that they have one power and authority, that there is a consubstantial Trinity, one Deity to be adored in three subsistence's or persons: let him be anathema. There is only one God and Father, from whom all things come, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things are, and one holy Spirit, in whom all things are.
- 2 If anyone will not confess that the Word of God has two nativities, that which is before all ages from the Father, outside time and without a body, and secondly that nativity of these latter days when the Word of God came down from the heavens and was made flesh of holy and glorious Mary, mother of God and ever-virgin, and was born from her: let him be anathema.
- 3 If anyone declares that the [Word] of God who works miracles is not identical with the Christ who suffered, or alleges that God the Word was with the Christ who was born of woman, or was in him in the way that one might be in another, but that our lord Jesus Christ was not one and the same, the Word of God incarnate and made man, and that the miracles and the sufferings which he voluntarily underwent in the flesh were not of the same person: let him be anathema.
- 4 If anyone declares that it was only in respect of grace, or of principle of action, or of dignity or in respect of equality of honour, or in respect of authority, or of some relation, or of some affection or power that there was a unity made between the Word of God and the man, or if anyone alleges that it is in respect of good will, as if God the Word was pleased with the man, because he was well and properly disposed to God, as Theodore claims in his madness; or if anyone says that this union is only a sort of synonymity, as the Nestorians allege, who call the Word of God Jesus and Christ, and even designate the human separately by the names "Christ" and "Son", discussing quite obviously two different persons, and only pretending to speak of one person and one Christ when the reference is to his title, honour, dignity or adoration; finally if anyone does not accept the teaching of the holy fathers that the union occurred of the Word of God with human flesh which is possessed by a rational and intellectual soul, and that this union is by synthesis or by person, and that therefore there is only one person, namely the lord Jesus Christ, one member of the holy Trinity: let him be anathema. The notion of "union" can be understood in many different ways. The supporters of the wickedness of Apollinarius and Eutyches have asserted that the union is produced by a confusion of the uniting elements, as they advocate the disappearance of the elements that unite. Those who follow Theodore and Nestorius, rejoicing in the division, have brought in a

union which is only by affection. The holy church of God, rejecting the wickedness of both sorts of heresy, states her belief in a union between the Word of God and human flesh, which is by synthesis, that is by a union of subsistence. In the mystery of Christ, the union of synthesis not only conserves without confusing the elements that come together but also allows no division.

- 5 If anyone understands by the single subsistence of our lord Jesus Christ that it covers the meaning of many subsistence's, and by this argument tries to introduce into the mystery of Christ two subsistence's or two persons, and having brought in two persons then talks of one person only in respect of dignity, honour or adoration, as both Theodore and Nestorius have written in their madness; if anyone falsely represents the holy synod of Chalcedon, making out that it accepted this heretical view by its terminology of "one subsistence", and if he does not acknowledge that the Word of God is united with human flesh by subsistence, and that on account of this there is only one subsistence or one person, and that the holy synod of Chalcedon thus made a formal statement of belief in the single subsistence of our lord Jesus Christ: let him be anathema. There has been no addition of person or subsistence to the holy Trinity even after one of its members, God the Word, becoming human flesh.
- 6 If anyone declares that it can be only inexactly and not truly said that the holy and glorious ever-virgin Mary is the mother of God, or says that she is so only in some relative way, considering that she bore a mere man and that God the Word was not made into human flesh in her, holding rather that the nativity of a man from her was referred, as they say, to God the Word as he was with the man who came into being; if anyone misrepresents the holy synod of Chalcedon, alleging that it claimed that the virgin was the mother of God only according to that heretical understanding which the blasphemous Theodore put forward; or if anyone says that she is the mother of a man or the Christ-bearer, that is the mother of Christ, suggesting that Christ is not God; and does not formally confess that she is properly and truly the mother of God, because he who before all ages was born of the Father, God the Word, has been made into human flesh in these latter days and has been born to her, and it was in this religious understanding that the holy synod of Chalcedon formally stated its belief that she was the mother of God: let him be anathema.
- 7 If anyone, when speaking about the two natures, does not confess a belief in our one lord Jesus Christ, understood in both his divinity and his humanity, so as by this to signify a difference of natures of which an ineffable union has been made without confusion, in which neither the nature of the Word was changed into the nature of human flesh, nor was the nature of human flesh changed into that of the Word (each remained what it was by nature, even after the union, as this had been made in respect of subsistence); and if anyone understands the two natures in the mystery of Christ in the sense of a division into parts, or if he expresses his belief in the plural natures in the same lord Jesus Christ, God the Word made flesh, but does not consider the difference of those natures, of which he is composed, to be only in the onlooker's mind, a difference which is not compromised by the union (for

he is one from both and the two exist through the one) but uses the plurality to suggest that each nature is possessed separately and has a subsistence of its own: let him be anathema.

- 8 If anyone confesses a belief that a union has been made out of the two natures divinity and humanity, or speaks about the one nature of God the Word made flesh, but does not understand these things according to what the fathers have taught, namely that from the divine and human natures a union was made according to subsistence, and that one Christ was formed, and from these expressions tries to introduce one nature or substance made of the deity and human flesh of Christ: let him be anathema. In saying that it was in respect of subsistence that the only-begotten God the Word was united, we are not alleging that there was a confusion made of each of the natures into one another, but rather that each of the two remained what it was, and in this way we understand that the Word was united to human flesh. So, there is only one Christ, God, and man, the same being consubstantial with the Father in respect of his divinity, and also consubstantial with us in respect of our humanity. Both those who divide or split up the mystery of the divine dispensation of Christ and those who introduce into that mystery some confusion are equally rejected and anathematized by the church of God.
- 9 If anyone says that Christ is to be worshipped in his two natures, and by that wishes to introduce two adorations, a separate one for God the Word and another for the man; or if anyone, so as to remove the human flesh or to mix up the divinity and the humanity, monstrously invents one nature or substance brought together from the two, and so worships Christ, but not by a single adoration God the Word in human flesh along with his human flesh, as has been the tradition of the church from the beginning: let him be anathema.
- 10 If anyone does not confess his belief that our lord Jesus Christ, who was crucified in his human flesh, is truly God and the Lord of glory and one of the members of the holy Trinity: let him be anathema.
- 11 If anyone does not anathematize Arius, Eunomius, Macedonius, Apollinarius Nestorius, Eutyches and Origen, as well as their heretical books, and also all other heretics who have already been condemned and anathematized by the holy, catholic and apostolic church and by the four holy synods which have already been mentioned, and also all those who have thought or now think in the same way as the aforesaid heretics and who persist in their error even to death: let him be anathema.
- 12 If anyone defends the heretical Theodore of Mopsuestia, who said that God the Word is one, while quite another is Christ, who was troubled by the passions of the soul and the desires of human flesh, was gradually separated from that which is inferior, and became better by his progress in good works, and could not be faulted in his way of life, and as a mere man was baptized in the name of the Father and the Son and the holy Spirit, and through this baptism received the grace of the holy Spirit and came to deserve sonship and to be adored, in the way that one adores a statue of the emperor, as if he were God the Word, and that he became after his resurrection immutable in his thoughts and entirely without sin. Furthermore, this

heretical Theodore claimed that the union of God the Word to Christ is rather like that which, according to the teaching of the Apostle, is between a man and his wife: The two shall become one. Among innumerable other blasphemies he dared to allege that, when after his resurrection the Lord breathed on his disciples and said, Receive the holy Spirit, he was not truly giving them the holy Spirit, but he breathed on them only as a sign. Similarly he claimed that Thomas's profession of faith made when, after his resurrection, he touched the hands and side of the Lord, namely My Lord and my God, was not said about Christ, but that Thomas was in this way extolling God for raising up Christ and expressing his astonishment at the miracle of the resurrection. This Theodore makes a comparison which is even worse than this when, writing about the acts of the Apostles, he says that Christ was like Plato, Manichaeus, Epicurus and Marcion, alleging that just as each of these men arrived at his own teaching and then had his disciples called after him Platonists, Manichaeans, Epicureans and Marcionites, so Christ found his teaching and then had disciples who were called Christians. If anyone offers a defense for this more heretical Theodore, and his heretical books in which he throws up the aforesaid blasphemies and many other additional blasphemies against our great God and savior Jesus Christ, and if anyone fails to anathematize him and his heretical books as well as all those who offer acceptance or defense to him, or who allege that his interpretation is correct, or who write on his behalf or on that of his heretical teachings, or who are or have been of the same way of thinking and persist until death in this error: let him be anathema.

13 If anyone defends the heretical writings of Theodoret which were composed against the true faith, against the first holy synod of Ephesus and against holy Cyril and his Twelve Chapters, and also defends what Theodoret wrote to support the heretical Theodore and Nestorius and others who think in the same way as the aforesaid Theodore and Nestorius and accept them or their heresy and if anyone, because of them, shall accuse of being heretical the doctors of the church who have stated their belief in the union according to subsistence of God the Word; and if anyone does not anathematize these heretical books and those who have thought or now think in this way, and all those who have written against the true faith or against holy Cyril and his twelve chapters, and who persist in such heresy until they die: let him be anathema.

14 If anyone defends the letter which Ibas is said to have written to Mari the Persian, which denies that God the Word, who became incarnate of Mary the holy mother of God and ever virgin, became man, but alleges that he was only a man born to her, whom it describes as a temple, as if God the Word was one and the man someone quite different; which condemns holy Cyril as if he were a heretic, when he gives the true teaching of Christians, and accuses holy Cyril of writing opinions like those of the heretical Apollinarius ;which rebukes the first holy synod of Ephesus, alleging that it condemned Nestorius without going into the matter by a formal examination; which claims that the twelve chapters of holy Cyril are heretical and opposed to the true faith; and which defends Theodore and Nestorius and their heretical teachings and books. If anyone defends the said letter and does not anathematize it and all

those who offer a defense for it and allege that it or a part of it is correct, or if anyone defends those who have written or shall write in support of it or the heresies contained in it, or supports those who are bold enough to defend it or its heresies in the name of the holy fathers of the holy synod of Chalcedon, and persists in these errors until his death: let him be anathema.

Such then are the assertions we confess. We have received them from.

- 1 Holy Scripture, from
- 2 The teaching of the holy fathers, and from
- 3 The definitions about the one and the same faith made by the aforesaid four holy synods.

Seventh Ecumenical Council

- 1 Anathema to the calumniators of the Christians, that is to the image breakers.
- 2 Anathema to those who apply the words of Holy Scripture which were spoken against idols, to the venerable images.
- 3 Anathema to those who do not salute the holy and venerable images.
- 4 Anathema to those who say that Christians have recourse to the images as to gods. Anathema to those who call the sacred images idols.
- 5 Anathema to those who knowingly communicate with those who revile and dishonor the venerable images.
- 6 Anathema to those who say that another than Christ our Lord hath delivered us from idols.

Notes:

