

**Intercession & Supplication:
A Bible Study**

By:

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Princes shall come out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God. – Psalms 68:31

Are ye not as children of the Ethiopians unto me, O children of Israel? - Amos 9:7a

From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia my suppliants, even the daughter of my dispersed, shall bring mine offering. – Zephaniah 3:10

Editor's Preface

This book is written in an effort to give us a better understanding on how to use our greatest weapon against oppression and affliction: prayer. In prayer there are two things we need from God: grace and mercy. God's grace and mercy are always available to us in great abundance. Yet because of the weakness of our flesh, at times we do not realize the presence of either His grace or His mercy. Therein lies the importance of prayer.

Yet, what is the nature of these prayers for grace and for mercy? What forms do these prayers take that enable grace and mercy to be realized? We realize grace through supplication and mercy is realized through intercession. His Grace, Abuna Gabriel has put together a brief teaching for us on supplication and intercession, by which we might learn how to realize God's abundant grace and mercy in our lives.

May our Lord bless us through the words of His servant, the bishop, that we might enjoy the richness of God's grace and mercy. Amen.

Chapter I

Supplicatory and Intercessory Prayer Pt. I: What is Supplication and Intercession?

Prayer of Supplication

The nature of supplication is much more than a casual request. The word "supplication" means offering petition for other. In other words, supplication means offering prayers for others. Supplication should be offered to God for the following parties and situations:

- We should pray the prayers of supplication for ourselves concerning both material and spiritual needs. First of all, we need to see that our priorities are in order, in that we are seeking first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness in our lives.
- We should make supplication to God for our material needs. It is written by Paul, "My God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:19). During our supplication, if we always give priority to seeking the Kingdom and His righteousness, we should be sure that God as our Father and the Lord will give, and add more than we expect. He will meet all our needs as it is written by Paul, "Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine according to His power that is at work within us" (Eph. 3:20). It should be noted that our personal supplications must be offered with thanksgiving. St. Paul wrote, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your request be made known to God" (Phil. 4:6).

- We should offer supplication to God for God's people that are believers (saints). For it is said, "...Praying always with all prayers and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all" (Eph. 6:18). It is also necessary to always offer supplications for all men and for those who are in authority. This of course would include non-believers. St. Paul gives solid support to this idea when he says, "I exhort therefore, that first of all supplications, prayers, intercessions and thanksgiving be made for all men, for kings and all that are in authority that we may lead a quiet and peaceful life in all godliness and honesty" (1 Tim. 2:1-3).
- Supplications can also be offered to God for protection, for rain, and for God's Spirit to be poured out upon the earth (Zech. 10:1). Supplications can be made for many different kinds of benefits as was offered by King Solomon during the great supplication at the dedication of the temple (1 Kings 8:22-26).

Based on this scriptural framework, our Orthodox Church is always offering prayers of supplications to God for the things listed below:

- For all her congregations.
- For all Archbishops and Bishops, clergy of Orthodox Churches, for all those who are in authority, and the Heads of State.
- For those who hunger and thirst, those in prison, those who are sick, those who are in captivity and for those who are traveling by sea, land, and air.
- For those who have sinned and transgressed.
- For those who have fallen asleep in the Orthodox Faith.
- For the rain, and the waters of the rivers and the seas, for temperate seasons, abundance of fruits of

the earth, and for peaceful times to the Lord.

In the life of the Church, the prayers of supplication play the most significant role. It should be known that according to Orthodox Church Canon, most of the liturgical prayers are prayers of supplication. Some of the liturgical prayers of course, are prayers of intercession.

The Gift of Reconciliation and Intercession

Saints have the power of reconciliation and intercession. St. Paul wrote, "All this is from God, who reconciled up to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5:18). We believe that the apostles and disciples chosen by the Lord were saints and have the power of intercession and reconciliation. According to the Word of God, the prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective. St. James, who was an apostle and the first Bishop of Jerusalem, explained this in his epistle. He said, "Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective. Elijah was a human being like us, who prayed fervently for it not to rain, and for three years and six months, it did not rain on the earth. Then he prayed again, and the heavens gave rain and the earth yielded its harvest (James 5:16-19).

Therefore, our Orthodox Church believes that the righteous and saints like Abraham, other prophets, the Apostles, and all martyrs have the power of intercession and supplication. However, the followers of Protestant Churches deny and reject intercession and supplication of the righteous after death. Nobody can pray and make intercession after death. According to the Protestants, saints or the righteous have the power to intercede and supplicate God on behalf of others only during their earthly

Chapter II

Supplicatory and Intercessory Prayer: Pt. II: Examples of Intercessory Prayer

Prayers of Intercession

Briefly defined, the prayers of intercession are prayers, which are being offered to God by someone asking for forgiveness for someone else. According to the Orthodox Church Canon, the saints have the right to offer intercession to God for the people who have provoked God by their bad actions and transgressions. We have many facts and witnesses in the Holy Scriptures that tell how the saints and righteous had offered prayers of intercession to God to hold back his judgment against sinners. Among these saints and righteous men were the following:

The Intercession of Abraham

Abimelech, King of Gerar took Sara, the wife of Abraham. God punished Abimelech for his actions. Abimelech realized his mistake and went to Abraham and begged him for forgiveness. Abraham stood between God and Abimelech and offered an intercession on behalf of Abimelech. God heard and accepted the intercession of Abraham and healed the wife and all the families of Abimelech (Gen. 20:1-18).

It is very fascinating to know that God is always merciful, and compassionate, and always ready to hear the petitions of righteous people for the sake of sinners. If in Sodom and Gomorrah, there were even ten righteous people, God would have held back His wrath towards those cities. When no righteous people were found, He poured out his plague over Sodom and Gomorrah.

The Intercession of Moses

When the Israelites committed idolatry by worshiping the golden calf, God told Moses that He was going to destroy them. Moses stood up between God and the people of Israel, and offered intercession on behalf of the Israelites. As a result, the merciful God changed His mind about destroying them and showed pity on them (Ex. 32:10-15, Num. 12: 1-16, 16:12-21).

The Intercession of the Man of God

While King Jeroboam was standing before the altar to offer incense (which he was not supposed to do - not being a Levite), a man of God came out of Judah and prophesied against Jeroboam, King of Israel. At that time the king stretched forth his hand from the altar saying, "Seize Him!" As soon as he had stretched out his hand against the man of God, his hand withered, so that he could not draw it back to himself. Then the king said to the man of God, 'entreat now the face of the Lord your God and pray for me so that my hand may be restored to me.' So the man of God entreated the Lord, and the king's hand was restored to him and became as it was before" (1 Kings 13:1-7).

The Intercession of Job the Righteous

Job the Righteous offered the prayer of intercession to God for his friends and God accepted his prayer. We can read the whole history of these events in the Bible.

When the Lord had spoken these words to Job, the Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite, "Hear the word of the Lord."

against you and against your friends for you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has. Now therefore, take seven bulls and seven rams, and go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering, and my servant Job shall pray for you, and I will accept this prayer not to deal with you according to your folly; for you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has done.' So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite went to Job and did what the Lord had told them, and the Lord accepted the prayer of Job" (Job 42:7-10).

The Intercession of King David

King David offered a prayer of intercession on behalf of the Israelites to avoid destruction and calamity. God accepted David's intercession and burnt offerings, and at that point the pestilence was stopped (1 Chron. 21:14-27).

The Intercession of Jeremiah

The Prophet Jeremiah was asked by the remnants of Judah to offer the prayer of intercession to God. Jeremiah, therefore, stood before God and offered a prayer of intercession. While the people were waiting for the response to their request, the prophet came to the remnant and told them what God had told him (Jeremiah 42:1-22).

The Intercession of Elijah the Prophet

When the Prophet Elijah was staying at the house of the widow in Zarephath, the child of that widow became ill and died. Elijah stretched out himself upon the child three times and offered prayers of intercession to God for

the healing of the child. The Lord listened to the intercession of Elijah and the life of the child came unto him again and he revived (1 Kings 17:1-24). He also did a miraculous work by offering the prayer of intercession and making the rain to stop and to come down again (1 Kings 18:1-46).

The First Book of Kings tells us that King Ahab and the people of Israel started to worship Baal, the Canaanite god. Elijah zealously stood up and said to King Ahab, "As the Lord God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall be neither dew nor rain in these years except by my word." The Lord accepted the prayers of Elijah and for more than three years there was no rain. After three years, the prophet again stood before God and offered a prayer of intercession seven times. In a little while, the heavens grew black with clouds and wind, and there was a heavy rain on the earth (1 Kings 17:1-7, 18: 41-46).

The Intercession of St. Peter

St. Peter was invited to the town of Joppa, where a disciple named Tabitha lived. When he arrived at Joppa, Tabitha was dead. St. Peter told everyone to go outside, and then he knelt down and prayed before God. Once he was done with his prayer, he turned to the body of Tabitha and said, "Tabitha, get up." At that point, Tabitha got up (Acts 9:32-42).

Chapter III

Supplicatory and Intercessory Prayer

Pt. III - Intercession and Supplication After Death

Righteous people who had been given the privilege of intercession, supplication and the power of reconciliation during their earthly lives could not be stopped or frozen by the power of death. This is due to the following reasons:

- For those who believe in Jesus the Son of God, they never perish but have eternal life (John 3:16) and whoever believes in the Son of God has eternal life (John 3:5).
- Anyone who hears the Word of the Lord and believes in Him does not come under judgment but is passed from death to life (John 5:24).
- Death is not the final destination for Christians. According to the Bible, our final destination is with our Lord. The Lord Himself said, "Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am there will my servants be also" (John 12:26). St. Paul clearly emphasizes this point in his Epistle to the Philippians, "For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me; I do not know which I prefer. I am hard pressed between the two: my desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better..." (Phil. 1:21-23).
- According to the Word of God, death is only the separation of body and soul. For this reason the Orthodox Church believes that death is the ladder or the bridge of the soul on which it can pass from the material/visible world to the spiritual/invisible world. It is through death that the soul or the spirit of a

can return to God, for the Bible says, "...the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the breath (or spirit/soul) returns to God who gave it" (Eccles. 12:7 and Gen. 2:7).

- The centerpiece of main part of man is the soul. It is by having a soul that man could be called a living creature. Without the soul, the body of man cannot be called man, but body. The Scripture tells us that body without soul, or spirit, is dead (James 2:26).

Therefore, righteous people who had served the Lord and who were justified by their faith and good works, after their departure to the Lord, live with the Lord, praising and glorifying Him. According to the powers of reconciliation and intercession given to them during earthly service, the righteous have the right to offer the prayers of intercession and supplication to their Lord on behalf of the people who ask them for help as the angels are being sent to help or to serve those who are to inherit eternal salvation (Heb. 1:14).

The Bible tells us that *the souls, or the spirits*, of the righteous are living in the heavenly Jerusalem with all the angels and with the Lord Jesus Christ in the New Covenant (Heb. 12:22=24). St. Peter also confirmed that death is the departure of the soul of man, to God. He also emphasized that the body is nothing but the "tabernacle" of the soul. He wrote, "I think it is right, as long as I am in this tabernacle (the body), to refresh your memory, since I know that my death (the putting off of my tabernacle) will come soon, as indeed our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. And, I will make every effort so that after my *departure* you may be able at any time to recall these things" (2 Peter 1:13-16).

Again we read another testimony about this in St. Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians. He wrote, "For in this tent we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling. If indeed, when

we have taken it off, we will not be found naked. For we are still in the tent (the body), we groan under our burden, we wish not to be unclothed but to be further clothed, what is mortal may be swallowed up by life” (2 Cor. 5:2-4)

According to the Bible, at the time of death, the Christians, especially the souls of righteous men and holy martyrs, depart from their bodies and are transferred to the holy city of Jerusalem (Heb. 12:22-24). St. John wrote what the Lord revealed to him. He saw many souls of the holy martyrs under the altar of the Almighty God. He saw them praying and asking the Lord about those who slaughtered them (Rev. 6:9).

Our Orthodox Church, therefore, believes and teaches that the souls of saints and righteous people are living with Christ, praising him and offering the prayers of intercession on behalf of us all. The Holy Bible says about them, “These are they who have come of the great ordeal; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. For this reason, they stand before the throne of God, and worship Him day and night within His temple, and the One who is seated on the throne will shelter them. They will hunger no more, and thirst no more, the sun will not strike them nor any scorching heat; for the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and He will guide them to the spring of the water of life and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes” (Is. 49:10).

Chapter IV

Does Christ still Intercede on our Behalf?

It is known that Protestants are strongly against the prayers of intercession after death. They deny the existence of the intercessor after death. However, they believe and teach that Christ is the only mediator and intercessor. Their justifications for this belief are the following verses in the Scriptures: Rom. 8:34, 1 Tim. 2:5, Heb. 12:24, 1 John 2:1-2, and Heb. 7:25. Based on these references, Protestants are teaching the Christ is permanently making intercession for those who believe in Him.

However, according to the teaching of the Orthodox Church, Christ *was* the mediator for mankind, because the Scripture states, “He had to come like unto His brothers in every respect, so that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in the service of God, to make a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the people. Because He Himself was tested by what He suffered, He is able to help those who are being tested” (Heb. 2:17-18).

Until His crucifixion, Christ was a mediator between God and man. He took the places of Aaron and Melchizedek and offered the prayers that were made by Him in a place called Gethsemane (Matt. 26:36, Lk. 22:39-45). According to the Gospel of John, Jesus offered His high priestly prayer of intercession for those who followed Him and believed in Him before his arrest and crucifixion. In this high priestly prayer of intercession, Jesus declared that He had finished His main mission. He said, “I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do” (John 17:4).

Chapter V

The Perpetual Virginity of St. Mary the Mother of the Lord Jesus Christ

In the work of salvation of mankind, the life of the Virgin Mary played a very significant role. The following should be noted concerning the life of the Virgin Mary:

- Before she had conceived the Son of God, who is Christ, she lived a devout life of service to God, and was sanctified by God, at the Annunciation of the Angel Gabriel.
- Among the daughters of Israel, she was one of the most humble and prayerful.
- According to the holy tradition of the Orthodox Church, from the time she was a baby, she was given to the Lord because she was born by vow, like the prophet Samuel. Until the Lord called her to be the Mother of Jesus, she remained in the temple praying and serving the Lord.
- The Book of Negera Mariam (The Life History of Mary) gives witness that even before her birth she was under the protection of the Angels of God.

While St. Mary was living a miraculous life of prayer and meditation, God sent his Archangel Gabriel to her. The Archangel Gabriel came to her and said, "Hail, thou who are highly favored, the Lord is with you! Blessed art thou amongst women." But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what manner of salutation this should be. The angel said unto her, 'Fear not Mary, for thou hast found favor with God. And behold, thou shall conceive in the womb and bring forth a Son and shall call His name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father

David. And He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end.' Then said Mary unto the angel, 'How can this be since I know not a man?' And the angel answered and said unto her, 'The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee; therefore also that Holy One who shall be borne of thee shall be called the Son of God'" (Lk. 1:26-36).

As we have seen in the above passage, the angel of the Lord testified the following:

- When the angel said, "God is with you," this indicates that God is always with St. Mary.
- St. Mary was and is blessed among all women and found the greatest favor with God.
- When Our Lady, Mary declared her virginity in the presence of the angel, the angel testified that the Holy Spirit shall cover her and the power of the Most High (God) shall perpetually overshadow her. Thus, St. Mary always being overshadowed by the power of God and under the protection of the Holy Spirit became the Mother of the Son of God.

For the reason of this miraculous conception and birth of her Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the virginity of St. Mary could not be changed after the birth of Jesus. As Elizabeth confessed, the Blessed Virgin is the Mother of the Lord (Adonai), and St. Mary is always under the protection of the Holy Spirit. When St. Mary visited the house of Zechariah and met Elizabeth, with a loud voice Elizabeth said, "...And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord (Adonai) comes to me?" (Lk 1"9-44)

It is very important to notice here that Elizabeth, being filled with the Holy Spirit, confessed the following:

- Mary is the Mother of the Lord (the Mother of God).

To deny the perpetual virginity of St. Mary is indeed to disgrace the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit who from her childhood protected the Virgin from all carnal and spiritual impurities.

Question: Who denies the perpetual virginity of St. Mary, the Mother of the Lord?

Answer: Some of the followers of Protestantism deny the perpetual virginity of St. Mary. They say that after she gave birth to Jesus, Our Lady bore children to Joseph to whom she was married.

Question: What are the verses of the Bible by which the Protestants stumble into denying the perpetual virginity of the Mother of our Lord?

Answer: The verses of the Bible by which some groups of Protestants stumble from the Faith of the Holy Fathers, who strongly believed in the perpetual virginity of the Mother of the Lord are the following:

- “Joseph the fiancé of Mary...” (Matt. 1:16)
- “Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him, his fiancé. And he knew her not until she had brought forth her firstborn Son” (Matt. 1:24-25).
- “And when He came into His own country, He taught them in their synagogue in so much they were astonished and said, whence has this man this wisdom, and these mighty works? Is not this the carpenter’s son? Is His mother called Mary, and His brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas? And His sisters, are they not

with us? Whence then has this man all these things?” (Matt. 13:54-57, Mk. 6:1-4)

By these and other verses of Scripture some parts of Protestantism stumble from following the teachings of the Holy Fathers of the Church. However, our Orthodox Church teaches the following:

- Joseph, a righteous man, was never the husband of Mary. There is not even one single verse of Scripture that indicates that Joseph married the Virgin Mary¹; nor is there any book of Scripture, which tells us about the wedding of Joseph and Mary. Thus it is a great mistake to call Joseph the husband of Mary or to call Mary the wife of Joseph. It should be known that in any country or in any culture, before marriage the couple cannot be called husband and wife. Joseph was only the man to whom the Virgin Mary was pledged. Before the time of marriage, the Virgin Mary conceived the divine child, and when He was born, became the mother of Jesus Christ, who is the true God (1 John 5:20).

Concerning the divinity of Christ and the perpetual virginity of His Mother, most of the English versions of the Holy Bible reflect the doctrinal position of Protestantism, which is contrary to the ancient doctrine of the Holy Church. However, the ancient Ethiopic versions and the modern Ethiopic versions, and other ancient Orthodox versions of the Holy Bible read that Joseph was a righteous man to whom St. Mary was pledged. In the same manner, St. Mary too was only pledged to him for protection.

- “...He knew her not until she had brought forth her firstborn Son” (Matt. 1:25). From this verse, some Protestants believe that Joseph did not have sexual relations with Mary until she gave birth to Jesus, but after that, he did. Further, they say that St. Mary bore Joseph

a number of children whose names are mentioned in Matthew 13:54-57.

This kind of teaching is rejected and condemned by the Holy Orthodox Church, and also the Catholic Church has strongly opposed it. The words “till” or “until” do not define only particular or limited time. The Holy Bible tells us that the words can also define unlimited time. For instance, the Bible says, “Samuel did not see Saul again **until** the day of his death (1 Sam. 15:35). Furthermore, we read, “And Michal, the daughter of Saul had no child **till** the day of her death (2 Sam. 6:23). Again we read, “He will not break a bruised reed or quench a smoldering wick **until** he brings justice to victory” (Matt. 12:20).

In this manner it is very possible to bring more evidence to show that the words “till” and “until” indicate not only definite time, but also indefinite or unlimited time. Therefore, Joseph the Righteous never had marital relations with the Virgin Mary, because he knew that St. Mary had become the Mother of the Lord Jesus Christ, Who is the great God and Savior (Titus 2:13).

Moreover, concerning the word “firstborn,” it cannot be used as evidence to say that St. Mary had any children to Joseph after the birth of Christ. The Law of Moses, in speaking of the firstborn, did not allude as to whether or not any children were born after (Ex. 13:12-16). So, it is a grave mistake to judge by the word “firstborn,” that St. Mary had children from Joseph after the birth of Christ.

Furthermore, it is very important to know that Christ is also the firstborn of God the Father (Heb 1:6). From this it would be a great blasphemy to say that God had another son after His Firstborn Son. Likewise, to say that the Virgin Mary had children after the birth of her firstborn, Jesus Christ, is indeed a great blasphemy, because the mystery of Mary’s virginity is the word of God, and the mystery of the incarnation of the Son of God is the word of God.

of the same Holy Spirit. It is really a supernatural act. It cannot be comprehended by human beings.

- Concerning the children whose names are mentioned in Matthew 13:54-57, the Orthodox Church believes and teaches that they were the children of Joseph who had been born to him by his wife who had died.

According to the teaching of the Holy Orthodox Church, James, Joseph, Simon and Judah (Jude) were called the brothers of the Lord for the following reasons:

1. Their deceased mother was a relative of the Virgin Mary.
2. They lived and grew up together with Jesus under the guardianship of Joseph.
3. It was common tradition among the Jews to call those who lived together in the same house as a family, brothers and sisters.

But, if James, Simon, Judas and Joseph were the children of St. Mary, our Lord would not have committed His Mother to John, His disciple, instead of His brothers, when He was being crucified on the Cross (John 19:25).

According to the teaching of the Holy Fathers, the virginity of the Mother of our Lord is perpetual. This is because the vision that the Prophet Ezekiel had seen of the outward sanctuary, which looks toward the east, has served as the model of St. Mary’s perpetual virginity. The prophet wrote, “Then said the Lord unto me, ‘This gate shall be shut; it shall not be opened, and no man shall enter in by it. Because the Lord, the God of Israel has entered in by it, therefore, it shall be shut’” (Ezk. 44:2).

can listen to her voice not to follow the false witness of the inhabitants of Capernaum who blasphemed against Jesus by calling Him the son of Joseph the carpenter, and disgracing His Mother's perpetual virginity (Matt. 13:54-57, Mk. 6:1-4). Let us instead follow the teaching of the Holy Orthodox Church, and the Ancient Tradition passed on, unadulterated, for over two thousand (2000) years. Let us instead respect and honor the Virgin Mary as one who has found favor with God, and serves as an example for us to do the same. Let us follow the teachings of the Holy Bible as given by Elizabeth, who was filled with the Holy Spirit and said, "Blessed art thou amongst women and blessed is the fruit of the womb. And, whence is this to me that the Mother of my Lord should come to me?" (Lk. 1:42-44)

Let us worship the Triune God alone, for to only He is due worship. And, let us magnify God who saves us from our sin, as did St. Mary, the Mother of God:

"And Mary said, 'My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant; for behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed. For He who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is His Name. And, His mercy is on those who fear Him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with His arm; He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty. He has helped His servant Israel, in remembrance of His mercy, as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed forever.'"

Let us pray for the unity of our Faith, that together we might attain our salvation. The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace (Num. 6:23-27). Glory

be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. One God. Amen.

Notes

1. The Ethiopian Orthodox Scholars do not hold that St. Mary was the wife of Joseph and the terms "husband" and "wife" are never used to refer to the relationship between St. Mary and Joseph. The proper term for their relationship has always been and continues to be "betrothed," meaning "engaged."

Appendices

Appendix 1 **Ethiopia: Judaism and Christianity**

ETHIOPIA AND MONOTHEISM

The introduction of Judaism into Ethiopia is found in the *Kebra Negast* (the Glory of Kings), the traditional history of the Country. According to the *Kebra Negast*, the Queen of Sheba of Ethiopia came to Jerusalem to visit King Solomon. From the union of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba was born a son named Menelik (Ibene-Melek). When Menelik grew up, he visited his father in Jerusalem, and returned to Ethiopia by numerous Israelites, the children of the Levites, and the Ark of the Covenant, which he obtained, by God's grace. From that time on, Judaism was practiced in Ethiopia.

The customs of Ethiopians today, by and large, indicates widespread acceptance of the Old Testament. For example, Ethiopian boys are still circumcised on the eighth day after birth, as initiation into the "covenant of Abraham." In addition to numerous days of fasting, Ethiopians observe Old Testament dietary laws, including forbidding the consumption of pork. Both Saturday and Sunday are observed as Holy Days, and the Ethiopian Church holds separate seating for men and women. Priests and monks are singing and rejoicing in religious ceremonies in the Church, reminiscent of King David before the Holy Ark in 2nd Samuel chapter 6, verses 12-16.

Since biblical times, Ethiopia has been in contact with Jerusalem. We Ethiopians believe that we are very close to Jerusalem as well as to its tradition. Many Ethiopian women are named "Jerusalem" to express their attachment to the Holy City.

than any other people of the world.

THE INTRODUCTION OF CHRISTIANITY TO ETHIOPIA

Christianity was introduced into Ethiopia during the time of the Apostles (about 34 AD) by an Ethiopian Jew, the Eunuch of Queen Candace, then Queen of Sheba. This Ethiopian Jewish pilgrim came to Jerusalem to worship God. While returning from his journey, he met St. Philip the Evangelist on the road to Gaza. St. Philip, one of the seven Deacons, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, baptized the Eunuch. After having been baptized, the Ethiopian Eunuch returned to his country rejoicing and introduced Christianity to Ethiopia (Acts 8:26-40).

THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

The Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC) was officially established in 330 AD when St. Frumentius was consecrated in Alexandria as the first Bishop of Ethiopia by St. Athanasius, Patriarch of Alexandria. Christianity was established by the request of the Ethiopians.

The EOC directly follows the teachings of the Apostles as well as the Doctrines of St. Athanasius, which were declared at Nicea, at the First Ecumenical Council held in 325 AD. The EOC is one of the Oriental Orthodox Churches, which also include the Armenian, Syrian, Coptic, Eritrean, and Malankara (Indian) Orthodox Churches.

The Oriental Orthodox Church teaches that Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son of God, is one person, continuous in both Godhead and manhood, with the integrity and perfection of both. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church and the other Oriental Orthodox Churches thus affirm that Jesus Christ is perfect God and perfect man. In Him, Divinity and humanity are united without division, without separation and without confusion.

Therefore the Doctrine of the Ethiopian Church is perfectly orthodox. So it is absolutely erroneous to call her a Monophysite Church, as many theologians assert that Monophysite teaching denies the existence of the human nature in Christ. It must be noted also that some writers of ecclesiastical books and booklets erroneously refer to the EOC as "Coptic." However, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church is a national church of Ethiopia, both in geography and tradition. Therefore, our Church is not Coptic but Ethiopian.

We, as a traditional and conservative Church, maintain the Apostolic Faith that was once entrusted to us by the saints (Jude 1:3). We do not introduce any innovations in religion, nor do we move an ancient boundary marker set in place by our forefathers (Prov. 22:28). The faith of the Church is "one faith" (Eph. 4:5). This one faith is the faith of every member of the Church. Therefore, our teacher St. John the Evangelist says: "If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds" (2 John 10:11).

This basic source of the one faith is the Holy Bible. The other sources are the sayings of the saints, the authenticated creeds of the holy councils, and what was recorded in the Church books, especially the ritual books. All these are in accord with the Holy Bible and are called as a whole, "Church Tradition."

In this book, we are attempting to expound the main differences in belief, which exist between Orthodoxy and Protestantism, to discuss them in the light of the Holy Bible and pray to God to unify our belief. Our main plea is for nothing less than the unity of the Christian faith.

Appendix 2

The Holy Bible

The word "Bible" is derived from a Greek word, "biblion," which mean "book." The name of the Sacred Scriptures, the *Holy Bible*, comes from "biblia," which is the plural of "biblion." The Holy Bible is the Sacred Scriptures consisting of the Old and New Testaments. The word "testamentum" is a Latin word that means "covenant." Thus, the Old and New Testaments are synonymous with the Old and New Covenants.

The Bible is an Inspired Book

The Holy Bible is an inspired book. The word "inspired" means to breathe, or to blow hard. The Holy Spirit inspired or moved the holy men to write the text of the Holy Bible. Therefore, the Holy Scriptures are books of "divine breathing."

Who was the Writer of the Bible?

The writers of the Bible were the holy men inspired and moved by the Holy Spirit to write. St. Peter says, "For the prophecy never had its origin in the will of men, but men spoke from God as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:20). One can therefore say that the writer of the Holy Bible was the Holy Spirit, who used the holy men as instruments or agents.

Why is the Bible called Holy?

The Bible is called holy for the following reasons:

- The Bible was written by the holy men through the Holy Spirit

in turn makes the Bible holy.

- It is a divinely breathed book.

For what Purpose was the Bible Written?

- To testify about Jesus as the Messiah (John 5:35)
- To give witness that Jesus is the Messiah and the Son of God (John 20:30)
- To make everyone of us wise unto salvation through faith (2 Timothy 3:15)
- To provide our instruction, so that we might have hope by the steadfastness and the encouragement of the Scriptures (Romans 15:4).

The Meaning of the Holy Bible

The Holy Bible is the word of God. It is living and active, and is sharper than any double-edged sword (Hebrews 4:12). It is also divine prophecy (2 Peter 1:20), and the Law of God (Psalm 1:2).

Division of the Bible

The Holy Bible is divided into two parts - the Old and New Testaments. In the most generally accepted and widely used version of the Bible, we have thirty-nine (39) canonical books in the Old Testament and twenty-seven (27) canonical books in the New Testament books, giving a total of sixty-six (66) canonical books. However, according to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, there are an additional eight canonical books of the New Testament. Mostly, these eight books also are numbered as part of ecclesiastical canons of the church.

The word "canon" here means measure, or cord, or rod.

The word canon was used because such a cord or rod was used to measure the length of the books. These selected books were

six books are called canon. They were selected by the Holy fathers from many kinds of ecclesiastical holy books. Along with those sixty-six canonical sacred books, the Orthodox Church also accepts other holy books as canonical.

Classification of the Sacred Books

The Old Testament Books

Including the extra-canonical books, there are forty-seven (46) sacred books of the Old Testament, divided into five categories.

1. The Books of Law

The books of law are as follows: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. These sacred books were written by the Holy Spirit, through the prophet Moses. These five sacred books are sometimes called the Pentateuch, which means five, in Greek.

2. The Historical Books

The historical sacred books are Joshua, Judges, First and Second Samuel, First and Second Kings, First and Second Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, the Book of Ester, and the Book of Ruth.

3. The Poetical Sacred Books (The Wisdom Books)

These books are the Book of Job, the Book of Psalms, the Proverbs, the Book of Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon.

4. The Prophetically Sacred Books (The Prophecy Books)

the Book of Jeremiah and his Lamentations, the Book of Ezekiel and the Book of Daniel.

B. The books of the Minor Prophets: the Books of Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi

5. The Deuterocanonical (extra-canonical) Books

The Deuterocanonical Books are Tobit, Judith, Wisdom of Solomon, Wisdom of Joshua son of Sirach (also called Ecclesiasticus), Baruch, the four Books of Maccabees, the Letter of Jeremiah, the Prayer of Azariah and Songs of Ananiah, Mishael and Azariah, the Book of Susanna, and the First and Second Books of Esdras. These books are accepted by the Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Churches as canonical books. The Protestants, on the other hand, call them Apocryphal Books. The Greek word "apocryphal" means hidden or withdrawn from the common use.

The New Testament Books

The twenty-seven (27) sacred books of the New Testament are divided into four categories.

1. The Historical Books

The books in this grouping are the four Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles.

2. Paul's Epistles or Letters

There are fourteen (14) books in this group namely, Romans, First and Second Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, First and Second Thessalonians, First and Second Timothy, Titus, Philemon, and Hebrews.

3. *The General Epistles of the Three Apostles*

The General Epistles are the Letter of James, the First and Second Letters of Peter, First, Second and Third Letters of John, and the Letter of Jude (James' brother).

4. *The Apocalypse*

The Apocalypse is the Book of Revelation. The Book of Revelation was written by St. John the Apostle. This sacred book is the only prophetic book in the New Testament.

The word "apocalypse" is derived from the Greek word "apocalypses," meaning disclosure or revelation. The book was called "Revelation" because Jesus with his angel was revealed to St. John the Apostle.

5. *From the Ethiopian Church Canons*

Again, according to the Canons of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church there are an additional eight (8) books, which are part of the New Testament. These books are:

- The Books of St. Clement of Rome (First and Second Clement)
- The Books of the Synods (Order of Zion, Order of the Fathers, Canons of the Church, and the Apostolic Canon or the Didache)
- The Books of the Covenant (First and Second Book of the Covenant)

The Language of the Bible

Most of the Old Testament books were written in Hebrew

written in Aramaic. The New Testament books were also written at different times by different holy men. They were written in the Greek language because Greek was spoken by the majority of the people at that time. The New Testament books, also liturgical and historical books of the Church were written mainly in Greek.

The Authority of the Bible

The Holy Bible is the Word of God that was written by inspired men through the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the Orthodox Church strongly believes that the authority of the Bible is above all criticism; as the word of God, it is absolutely infallible and without error.

Conversely, the Protestant Church tends to have a more loose interpretation of the Holy Scriptures. Certain books, for example the Epistle of James, have been altogether disregarded by some. Further, some churches choose to adjust their interpretation of the Word to suit the current social climate. Rather, the Orthodox Church exhorts the faithful to adjust the social climate to suit the Word of God.

The Orthodox Church utilizes over two thousand (2000) years of established and founded Christian Tradition to interpret the Bible. This tradition calls us to "contend for the faith, which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 1:3). This same faith has been handed down to us by Christ, through the saints, unto the present.

Appendix 3

Baptism of Infants

Some Christian denominations argue that baptism should be given only to persons attaining the age or reason. However, our Orthodox Church believes and teaches that babies should also be baptized for the following reasons:

1. As it is written in the New Testament, all the children of Adam are inheritors of Adam's sin (Romans 5:1-21). As a result, babies - as descendants of Adam - are inheritors of Adam's sin. With that in mind, it is necessary for infants to be purified from Adam's sin through baptism.
2. As the circumcision of the Hebrews was the sign of the covenant between God and the people of Israel (Genesis 17:7-27), baptism is believed to be the seal of Christianity. In other words, under the New Testament Holy Baptism replaces circumcision.
3. In the Old Testament, babies had to be circumcised in order to be accepted into God's covenant. Likewise, babies should be baptized in order to be accepted as members of the Church.
4. According to the Law of Old Testament times, infants (boys or girls) were brought to the tent of meeting in order to be blessed at the ages of forty (40), for boys and for girls, eighty (80) days (Lev. 12:1-8). In like manner, our Ethiopian Orthodox Church invites babies to be blessed by the priest through baptism by water and the Holy Spirit.
5. In most, if not all countries of the world, it is required by law that every new born child be registered in the

an infant should be registered in the Book of Life - into citizenship of the Kingdom of God - through baptism.

6. Infants were sometimes consecrated to God while still in their mother's womb (Jer. 1:5, Luke 1:43-45). It is also said that from the lips of babies and infants, God has ordained praise (Psalm 8:2). Therefore, infants should not be prevented from being baptized.
7. Children are chosen by Jesus Himself. He said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these" (Mark 10:14).
8. Baptism is regeneration or rebirth. When our Lord was teaching Nicodemus about regeneration, He said, "No one can see the Kingdom of God unless he is born again" (John 3:3). He continues to say, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the Kingdom of God unless he is born of water and spirit" (John 3:5). Therefore, in order to inherit the Kingdom of God, everyone should be baptized by water and the Holy Spirit, even infants.
9. In the Apostolic Age, entire households were baptized together, including the babies. Some examples of that are the family of Cornelius (Acts 10:48), Lydia and her family (Acts 16:15), the keeper of the prison and his family (Acts 16:33), and Stephanas and his family, who were baptized by Paul (1 Cor. 1:16).

The history of the Church gives witness that the early Christians were baptizing their babies. Among the early (second century) fathers and teachers of the Church, Origen of Alexandria said, "The Apostles handed over to the Church, the tradition of baptizing babies because babies are baptized for the remission of inherited sin" (Book of Origen). It was said, "Baptizing babies is an Apostolic tradition." In the Apostolic Tradition, we read, "They shall baptize the little children first. If they can answer for themselves, let them answer. But, if they cannot, let their parents answer, or someone from their family answer."