

ANCIENT ORTHODOX CATHOLIC APOSTOLIC STATUTE

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE GREAT AND HOLY STATUTE

Worship and guidance have been at the forefront of humanity's existence since the making of man from the dust of the earth, and the woman from the rib of a man—wherewith it can be scientifically observed the manipulative transformation of the male into the female. Even existing before the creation of the heavens and the earth, the angelic host have likewise been committed to the regulative principles of worship and guidance by God with Spirit-filled ritualism. In the early Church, these things have become the canons or “rules” and liturgies or “people’s work” in order to further advance the cause of humanity in God. This, the *Ancient Orthodox Catholic Apostolic Statute*, is one of those canons offering administrative and liturgical guidance for the Ancient Orthodox Catholic Apostolic Church; ratified in Newark, New Jersey, United States of America, this—the *Great and Holy Statute*—is the principal rule, and is to be adhered to with great observance.

PREAMBLE

The Ancient Orthodox Catholic Apostolic Church, formed in the first century, in the Year of the Ascended Lord Jesus the Christ, known throughout the world as the Great and Holy Apostolic Church of Christ, or simply the Great and Holy Church, is an ancient Christian church and the Church established by Jesus the Christ, expanded through the Apostles of the Christ and their successors—from the Church Fathers and evangelists of old to those apostolic bishops and pious evangelists of contemporary times. She, the Ancient Orthodox Catholic Apostolic Church, is one of the world's oldest religious institutions and has played a role in the earliest days of Christendom in the Middle East, South and East Asia, Europe, and Africa.

A communion of autocephalous (self-headed and self-lawed) and autonomous (non-self-headed and non-self-lawed) churches—each governed by a council of several bishops (the Apostolic Synod) with the right to vote in councils, and several presbyters and laypersons from a number of the bishops' local churches in witness also maintaining or lacking the right to vote yet guaranteed the right to speak out against contradictions to the ancient and eternal faith—the Ancient Orthodox Catholic Apostolic Church is united and governed under, in order to express more fully the oneness in the Christ of all bodies

composing her, to make effective their common witness in Him, and to serve His Kingdom in the world until His Second Coming, the Ancient Orthodox Catholic Apostolic Statute set forth by the Antiochian Orthodox Catholic Apostolic Church, the Syracusan Orthodox Catholic Apostolic Church, and those autonomous bodies within their respective autocephalous mother churches, during the Great and Holy Council of Newark of 2019 (in the Year of the Lord).

Affirming the responsibility of those proven disciples of the Christ chosen to pastor over the Great and Holy Church by the Lord Jesus the Christ, the Ancient Orthodox Catholic Apostolic Church functions after the synodical manner, that is, the orthodox, episcopal, and conciliar formula as has been done since the beginning of the Church of Christ, which is, as stated prior, a communion of autocephalous and autonomous churches guided by their respective bishops in councils or synods—being men who have been chosen to lead in the preservation of truth and the sanctification of all souls in presbytery.

Rejecting the desire for unorthodox (or ungodly) episcopal governance under a single man and his subordinate synod, due to acknowledging the sole leadership of Jesus the Christ as head of His Church, and to the good works for the glory of God, the Ancient Orthodox Catholic Apostolic Church upholds the honorary offices of the first and second among equals, granted to the Ecumenical Metropolitan of the Church of Antioch and the Ecumenical Metropolitan of the Church of Roman Syracuse, both of whom equally govern according to the Ancient Orthodox Catholic Apostolic Statute.

The Ancient Orthodox Catholic Apostolic Church, subscribing to the provisions herein defined and regulated in preamble and throughout, that Holy Scripture and Holy Tradition are upheld, thus, preserving the Church, acknowledge the Statute is non-changeable as the Church need not revise her Holy Scripture nor Holy Tradition in any manner, for she is forever preserved in her sanctity, though the gates of Hades trial her daily that she might stumble out of her sanctity. The Church has been only permitted, per the Newark Council, the authority to update the regulations herein linguistically.

Acknowledging disagreements may occur from now and into the future, be they of general concern or of the antichrist powers against the Ancient Orthodox Catholic and Apostolic Church of Christ working within or externally, the Ancient Orthodox Catholic Apostolic Church, by this statute, upholds all disagreements to be judged by the Ancient Orthodox Catholic Apostolic Statute and her subordinate canons and other necessary regulations whether jurisdictional, theological, doctrinal, etcetera, that the Great Bride of the Christ remain steadfast in her constant proving of knowledge and wisdom, and that the world witnesses the triumph of the Great and Holy Apostolic Church of Christ over the

evil that plagues the whole of creation, visible and invisible, as Jesus the Christ has said the gates of Hades shall never overcome His righteous female to be wed to Him, which is the Church—the Bride of the Christ.

ARTICLE 1 – NAME

Being the One, Holy, Orthodox, Catholic, and Apostolic Church established by Jesus the Christ, as stated in the Preamble of the Statute, and adhering to the Creed of Nicaea and the Newark Creed, the official name of the Church is the “Ancient Orthodox Catholic Apostolic Church”. The name will be used in liturgical, canonical, and official texts, contexts, and administrative documents. The additional names of the Church—the “Great and Holy Apostolic Church of Christ”, “Great and Holy Church”, the “Church of Christ”, the “Great Church”, and simply, “the Church”—will also have the same uses.

The Ancient Orthodox Catholic Apostolic Church understands other Christian churches exist, albeit non-canonical, heretical, schismatic, etcetera, as a Christian church comprises—by definition—those claiming the Lord Jesus the Christ. The other churches are permitted the right to address themselves as the “Church of Christ”, “the Church”, or “Great Church”, and may even use those three names as a part of their church’s names in incorporation and noncorporation, as those terms are general terms, and the Christ has said many shall come in His name, whether they are with Him in the Church, or within some irregular form of the Christian assembling separate from the Twelve or Seventy Apostles, or if they are against Him as a wolf in sheep’s clothing within any of these three categories.

But “Ancient Orthodox Catholic Apostolic Church”, “Great and Holy Apostolic Church of Christ”, and “Great and Holy Church” should only pertain to the communion subscribing to the Statute, the Church herself.

In preventing unauthorized use of the Church’s official, holy name by non-canonicals, heretics, schismatics, and others, the “Ancient Orthodox Catholic Apostolic Church” is registered under mark and/or association as the “Ancient Orthodox Catholic Apostolic Church – Great and Holy Church (Antiga Igreja Católica Apostólica Ortodoxa – Grande e Santa Igreja)”, which shall be renewed consecutively until the Second Coming of the Lord by the Ecumenical Metropolitans; these two great bishops of the Church, otherwise known as the Diarchy, are charged with protecting her holy identity and principles of association.

The Church reserves her own free right to send letters to churches and clerics, and even claimant laypersons, claiming to be part of the Church, to have them legally refrain

from their self-identified affiliation to protect the Church's reputation from all forms of harm.

ARTICLE 2 – MISSION

The mission of the Ancient Orthodox Catholic Apostolic Church, as agreed upon during the Great and Holy Council of Newark, on 24 September 2019 in the Year of the Lord Jesus the Christ the Son of God, is: to be faithful in fulfilling the commandment of the Christ so that all people may be saved and come to the knowledge of the Truth; to preach, in accordance to God's will, the fullness of the good news of the Kingdom to the people of the world and to invite them to become communicants of the Ancient Orthodox Catholic Apostolic Church; to utilize for her divine mission the various languages of the world; to be the body of the Christ in the world and to be faithful to the traditions of early Christianity; to bare witness in truth and by God's grace and in the power of the Holy Spirit, to reveal the Christ's way of sanctification and eternal salvation to all humanity.

The Ancient Orthodox Catholic Apostolic Church will uphold her mission in unison through the Statute and in her handiwork be it the construction and due maintenance of local chapels, churches, temples, schools, centers for development, and other facilities for the preaching of the good news and education utilizing the various languages of the world; upholding the Holy Bible and Holy Tradition; and bearing witness in the Truth through acts of mercy and grace toward all regardless of a man or woman's condition or beliefs, without compromising the teachings of the Church that she is preserved to the coming of the Christ in the Heavens at the fulfillment of the Great Commission and the coming of the Antichrist—that wicked man of sin—from the earth.

Initiatives in obedience to the mission of the Church are primarily administered by the Diarchy, with powers delegated to the diocesan bishops or eparchs under their respective administrations. The delegated handiwork of the Church in the trust of the diocesan bishops or eparchs may also be further granted to certain deacons and laypersons within the Great and Holy Apostolic Church of Christ by the two great bishops. The revocation of delegations to the diaconate and laypersons is in the sole discretion of the diocesan bishops or eparchs, and the Ecumenical Metropolitans of Antioch and Syracuse-Rome, or Syracuse. Revoking delegating powers in mission initiatives may be overturned by the first and second among equals.

ARTICLE 3 – ORGANIZATION

The Ancient Orthodox Catholic Apostolic Church accepts that the religious authority for her is not a single leading bishop nor the Scriptures alone, but the Scriptures

(the Holy Bible, or Great and Holy Bible) as interpreted by the pre-ecumenical councils, the Council of Nicaea, and the Fathers of the Great and Holy Church who have maintained the faith, summarized in the Great and Holy Rudder of the Church. The Ancient Orthodox Catholic Apostolic Church, by canon law, is a binding communion of autocephalous and autonomous churches, whose status has been defined in the Preamble of the Ancient Orthodox Catholic Apostolic Statute. The Ecumenical Metropolitan of the Antiochian Orthodox Catholic Apostolic Church is first among equals, and the Ecumenical Metropolitan of the Syracusan Orthodox Catholic Apostolic Church is second among equals. The Ecumenical Metropolitans have the honor of being co-equal in their limited administration over the whole of the Ancient Orthodox Catholic Apostolic Church of Christ.

Full administration, where described, is for the moderation of their individual autocephalous bodies within the Church, and those autonomous bodies within their autocephalous churches. In limited administration over the whole Church, the two bishops are permitted the right, by canon law, to represent the whole of the Church in interchurch and international matters, to handle the functions of the not-for-profit religious association or foundation which remains for the purpose of recognition and the Church's right to own property and maintain her own commerce, to remove whosoever seeks to violate the canon law of the Church be it by false interpretation of the Statute, those lesser canons, the Scriptures, or Holy Tradition, and to excommunicate those who violate the canon law of the Church by the same prerequisites.

The Ecumenical Metropolitans are the two faces of the Church as a whole, and neither have more power over the other, because they are equal as all bishops are in the Church, and they symbolize the unity of the eternal yet unlimited Triune Godhead. The Ecumenical Metropolitans may be referred to as the two great bishops, or the Diarchy, as stated previously throughout the Statute.

The Diarchy encompasses the Executive Board of Trustees of the not-for-profit entity of the Ancient Orthodox Catholic Apostolic Church. The Ecumenical Metropolitans, as this board, are led ex officio by the Ecumenical Metropolitan of Antioch as president or chief executive officer and secretary. The Ecumenical Metropolitan of Syracuse serves as vice president or chancellor, and the Ecumenical Metropolitan of Syracuse also serves as treasurer for the Church.

The Ancient Orthodox Catholic Apostolic Church accepts that authority and the grace of God is directly passed down from the Diarchy to her bishops, presbyters, and the diaconate through the methods of prayer and the laying on of hands in her local

churches—a practice preserved by the Apostles of the Christ from the Old Testament laying on of hands as humanly possible, maintaining that this unbroken historical and physical link is an essential element of the true Church as referenced in Acts 8:17, 1 Timothy 4:14 and Hebrews 6:2; or by prayer according to human weakness as observed with Moses the Prophet, Joshua, and the others in their midst who intended to do as God has instructed.

The Church of Christ believes in apostolic succession. This assembling asserts that apostolic succession requires apostolic faith, and clergy without apostolic faith, who are in heresy, forfeit their claim to genuine apostolic succession, which is the carrying of the Way just as the Apostles of the Christ did before their successors were chosen to succeed them, as all bishops recommend their succeeding presbyters who shall be confirmed by the local administration of the local church assemblies and synods as detailed in those lesser canons.

All member churches of the Great and Holy Ancient Orthodox Catholic Apostolic Church of Christ—be they autocephalous or autonomous—are unified in all things by the Ancient Orthodox Catholic Apostolic Statute, as stated prior, and also under the omophorions of the Diarchy.

The autocephalous member churches of the Church, established separately yet subordinate as legal subsidiaries of the Church by its association, are: the Antiochian Orthodox Catholic Apostolic Church (known also as the Antiochian Metropolitanate, the Metropolitan Catholicate of Antioch, Antiochian Catholic Apostolic Church, or Antiochian Church), and the Syracusan Orthodox Catholic Apostolic Church (otherwise known as the Syracusan-Roman Metropolitanate, the Syracusan Metropolitanate, Syracusan Catholic Apostolic Church, or the Old Latin-Syracusan or Old Roman-Syracusan Church or the Syracusan Church). These two autocephalous churches of the Christ are the only autocephalous churches of the Ancient Orthodox Catholic Apostolic Church by canon law, and there shall be none admitted or revoked to come beyond these two churches.

Within the Antiochian Orthodox Catholic Apostolic Church lies a body of autonomous jurisdictions or churches. As those autonomous churches or jurisdictions within the autocephalous Orthodox Catholic Apostolic Church of Antioch are members of the Ancient Orthodox Catholic Apostolic Church in their entirety, they are bound by canon law, as stated prior in preamble. The autonomous jurisdictions of the Antiochian Catholic Apostolic Church are: the *Antiochian Exarchate of Jerusalem*, the *Antiochian Exarchate of Caesarea*, and the *Antiochian Exarchate of Egypt, Arabia, Persia and India*—all three of which are under the chief authority of the Ecumenical Metropolitan of Antioch as specialized autonomous churches existing under the titular thrones; the *Antiochian*

Exarchate of Thracia with authority over Eastern Europe and the Eastern European diaspora; the *Antiochian Exarchate of Cyprus* with authority over Cyprus and the Cypriot diaspora; and the *Antiochian Exarchate of America*—also known as the *Ancient Antiochian Orthodox American Exarchate*—which is the only autonomous jurisdiction under Antioch that operates solely within Canada, the United States of America, and the Caribbean nation-states with exception to the Dominican Republic, which is directly under the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Metropolitan of Antioch.

The Antiochian Exarchate of America is the most pre-eminent of the autonomous churches under the Antiochian Metropolitan Catholicate; it is distinctive through the understanding that it is led by the Grand Ecumenical Exarch and First Hierarchy of the Ancient Antiochian Orthodox American Exarchate and their own Exarchate Synod and Council; it has the most self-governance of the autonomous churches under the Antiochian Metropolitanate, yet: it views itself as more socially conservative in its patrimony; serves most of English-speaking North America and the Caribbean; yet: it commemorates the Ecumenical Metropolitan, Archeparch and Catholicos of Antioch for maintaining primacy of authority and honor; upholds the importance of unity—thereby forgoing any sign of uncanonical attempts at schism—acknowledges bishops are not ordained outside of the self-governing jurisdiction; and proclaims greater political neutrality, while looking more towards social conservatism and libertarianism.

This is the only autonomous jurisdiction which also holds a separate historic episcopacy from the remainder of the Ancient Orthodox Catholic Apostolic Church, due to socio-political circumstances with the Ecumenical Metropolitan's throne relocating from the United States of America, to the Federative Republic of Brazil due to political and religious persecution.

All churches remaining outside of the jurisdiction of the autonomous bodies, and even those of the local organizations, enter into the jurisdiction of the Antiochian Church's *Ecumenical Archeparchy of Saints Peter and Paul*, or its other eparchies: the *Ecumenical Eparchy of Saints James and John in the Andes and Iberia*; the *Ecumenical Eparchy of Saint John the Beloved in Angola and Mozambique*; the *Ecumenical Abbacy of the Twelve Apostles in Nigeria, Namibia and Southern Africa*; the *Ecumenical Abbacy of Saint Michael the Archangel in Southeast Asia*; the *Ecumenical Abbacy of the Lord Christ the King in Eastern Europe and Cyprus*; or the *Ecumenical Abbacy of Saint Mary Magdalene for Evangelization*. The abbacies are permanent, missional territories; and the monastic jurisdiction of the Lord Christ the King's leadership is also the exarch for Thracia and Cyprus.

The Syracusan Church also maintains a body of autonomies within her autocephalous governance. The jurisdictions of the Syracusan Orthodox Catholic Apostolic Church in autonomy are the *Syracusan Prelature of Gaul*, the *Syracusan Prelature of Milan*, the *Syracusan Prelature of Malta*—all three of which are under the chief authority of the Ecumenical Metropolitan of Syracuse as specialized autonomous churches existing under titular thrones; the *Syracusan Prelature of Britannia* with authority over the British and Canadian diasporas, including former British colonial territories though the mother archdiocese has pre-eminence; and the *Syracusan Prelature of Germania* with authority over the German diaspora.

Churches outside of autonomy and organizational jurisdiction immediately enter the jurisdiction of the Syracusan Orthodox Catholic Apostolic Church's *Ecumenical Archdiocese of Saint Simon Peter*, or its other dioceses: the *Ecumenical Diocese of All Saints and Apostles in Europe*; or the *Ecumenical Abbacy of Saint Paul of Tarsus in Africa*. Its abbacy is a permanent mission.

Each church, whether autocephalous or autonomous, maintains the office of a ruling bishop and council of bishops (the local Apostolic Synod) to administer their jurisdiction, including, as stated prior in preamble text, within their organizational structures as well.

These offices and councils also exist for the purpose of leading the Church into the preservation and teaching of the apostolic and patristic traditions and church practices. Every bishop in the Ancient Orthodox Catholic Apostolic Church has a territory (metropolitanate or metropolis, eparchy or eparchate, exarchate, or diocese or prelature) over which they govern. The main duty of the bishop is to ensure the traditions and practices—Holy Tradition from God and guidelines of worship from God—of the Church of Christ are both taught and preserved.

As evident, bishops are equal in their ecclesiastical authority and cannot interfere in the jurisdiction of other bishops except whereas noted otherwise for the rights of the Ecumenical Metropolitans. Administratively, the bishops of the Church of Christ and their territories gather at least twice a year to discuss the state of affairs within the Church (the Great Synod). By canon law, bishops and the councils have the ability to administer guidance in individual cases, and their actions do not usually set precedents that affect the entire Ancient Orthodox Catholic Apostolic Church, though the Antiochian Church and the Syracusan Church, in their honor maintain minor influence in joint-declarations pertaining to the traditions, statutes, and canons of the Church so long as they do not contradict or usurp the Church's established ethos.

Bishops of the Church are ordained according to the Scriptures of 1 Timothy 3:1-7, and all other church officers as well by 1 Timothy 3:8-13, or Titus 1:5-7. Within the Antiochian Church, bishops serve in ecumenical eparchies, wherewith they may be ordained as ordinary eparchs; vicarian-titular eparchs; exarchs or leaders over territories not making up ecumenical eparchies; or appointed as chorbishops when there are no individuals able to lay hands, although there are individuals able to pray on behalf of the ordinary episcopates. In the Syracusan Church, they may be ordained in ecumenical dioceses as ordinary bishops, auxiliary bishops, titular bishops, and prelates. Chorbishops do not exist among the Syracusan Catholic Apostolic Church. All vicarian or titular episcopates serve as oikonomos to their ordinaries.

The Church therefore maintains the offices of the clergy imbued with the powers of holy orders are only permitted for men (that is, the male) by Holy Scripture and Holy Tradition with exception to the female diaconate, though the positions of lay officers with and without liturgical or pastoral works may be open to men and women according to the local statutes of the autocephalous churches, including that of the apostle and monastic, territorial abess or abbot.

Additionally, the offices of the clergy imbued with the powers of minor orders of acolyte which assists the bishops alongside the diaconate; and the minor orders in the office of subdeacon which assists deacons in their service to the presbyters and bishops; are solely permitted for men (that is, the male) by Holy Scripture and Holy Tradition as they become prepared to ascend into regular holy orders through the multigenerational promises of God; acolytes and subdeacons must be at least seven years of age, yet by their fourteenth birthday may serve in the major orders, including as presbyters and bishops when the circumstances are possible by examining their spiritual and theological maturity of faith.

Local statutes of the autocephalous churches are minor canons pertaining to the specific jurisdiction of a body of the Church of Christ, and serve the purpose of providing regulations within those autocephalous churches in accordance with the law of the land. A statute is forbidden if it seeks to usurp the Statute and violate the ethos of the Great and Holy Apostolic Church of Christ. Supporters of statutory violations shall be dealt with accordingly as all are who seek to usurp the ethos of true Orthodox Catholic and Apostolic Christianity, for the Great and Holy Apostolic Church of Christ is to stand against the gates of Hades, with those gates never prevailing as Jesus the Christ promised.

ARTICLE 4 – DOCTRINE

The Ancient Orthodox Catholic Apostolic Church believes in these core theologies and doctrines: revelation has one common source—God—and two distinct modes of

transmission: Holy Scripture and Holy Tradition, and that these are authentically interpreted, as agreed upon within the Ancient Orthodox Catholic Apostolic Statute, with guidance from the Holy Spirit.

The Ancient Orthodox Catholic Apostolic Church is guided and protected by the Holy Spirit, so she is not capable of apostatizing, particularly when a firm decision is reached in the great and holy councils or joint-declarations pertaining to the teachings of the Church of Christ or smaller disputes among the personal beliefs of members.

The teaching of the Holy Spirit's preservation is upheld also in the local statutes of the autocephalous bodies of the Church, as they may discern theological and doctrinal issues which may be presented before the Ancient Orthodox Catholic Apostolic Church as a whole according to the pre-ecumenical councils, the Nicæan Creed, the Creed of Newark, and the writings of the Fathers of the Great and Holy Church and all others written in this Great and Holy Rudder, which collectively form the Holy Tradition of the Great and Holy Church of Jesus the Christ, Son of God, and God of God.

Holy Scripture in the Church consists of the forty-nine books of the Old Testament, and the thirty-six books of the New Testament. The Holy Bible in the Ancient Orthodox Catholic and Apostolic Church uses the Targum, Septuagint, pre-Vulgate and Peshitta texts for the Old Testament and the Textus Receptus for the New Testament. Holy Scripture is understood by canon law to contain historical fact, poetry, idiom, metaphor, simile, moral fable, parable, prophecy and wisdom literature, and each bears its own consideration in its interpretation. While divinely inspired, the text stills consist of words in human languages, arranged in humanly recognizable forms. The Great and Holy Apostolic Church of Christ does not oppose honest critical and historical study of the Bible, but opposes private interpretation.

In biblical interpretation, the Church decrees in unison to not use speculations, suggestive theories, or incomplete indications, not going beyond what is fully known. Holy Scripture and Holy Tradition are collectively known as the deposit of faith within the Church of Christ.

The Church of Christ professes the belief in one eternal God who is both within and outside the universe and all creation as three Persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Together, these three Persons are called the Most Holy and Sovereign Trinity. The Most Holy and Sovereign Trinity's Persons are three distinct Persons, yet of the same relation—being God. Ecumenical Metropolitan Auriel Jones Barbosa explained this interpretation stating: “the Father is neither the Son nor the Holy Spirit, the Son is neither the Father nor the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit is neither the Father nor

the Son, but in the end, They are God.” The Father does not proceed and is not begotten as the Self-Sustaining and Uncaused Fountainhead. The Son is eternal and begotten of the Father outside of time in eternity, but not created. The Holy Spirit is eternal and proceeds from the Father but is not created or begotten. The Holy Spirit proceeds out of time, and from eternity with the Son, from the Father. The Son and the Holy Spirit are never to be held as creations, nor lesser than the Father by these measures. The Son and Holy Spirit share the same essence of the Father, and this essence is deity. The Church upholds that the Son has preeminence by all things being made through Him, as He has all rights over everything the Father has. It is noted that in the Trinitarian understanding of the Church of Christ, that the Father encompasses all things; while He lacks a physical form, the Christ is the express image of the Father. The Christ is God wrapped in physicality, never losing deity. The Holy Spirit, while lacking a physical form mostly, appears as a flame or dove, or by various other methods found in Holy Scripture.

Regarding the nature of the Christ, it is upheld that in His one person, divinity and humanity are united in one nature without separation, without confusion, without alteration and without mixing, where the Christ is consubstantial with God the Father. This Christology is often later referred to as Miaphysitism, or Old Oriental Christology.

The Church understands the Christ’s death and resurrection to be actual historical events, as described in the Four Gospels and proclaimed in the Nicæan Creed and the Creed of Newark. The bishops and presbyters of the Church preach that the Christ was born, was crucified, died, descended into Hades as all humans do, conquered Hades and Death himself, rose again and freed the world by granting salvation to all, and ascended into Heaven where He will return again in judgment.

On sin, salvation, and the Incarnation, the Church teaches at some point in the beginnings of humanity’s existence, mankind was faced with a choice: to learn the difference between good and evil through observation or through participation. The biblical story of Adam and Eve relates this choice by mankind to participate in evil, accomplished through disobedience to God’s command of tending to their jurisdiction after having been placed in the Garden of Eden, which was the holiest place within the region of Eden upon early terrain—perhaps, a mountainous region now obscured after being violently expelled. Both the intent and the action of mankind were separate from God’s will; and it is that separation that defines and marks any operation as sin. The separation from God caused the fall from His grace, a severing of mankind from his creator and the source of his life. The result was the diminishment of human nature and its subjection to death and corruption, an event commonly referred to as the “fall of man”.

When members of the Ancient Orthodox Catholic Apostolic Church refer to fallen nature, they must not say that human nature has become evil in itself. Human nature is still formed in the image of God; humans are still God's creation, and God has never created anything evil. But humanity's fallen nature remains open to evil intentions and actions.

It is sometimes said that humans are "inclined to sin", that is, humanity finds some sinful things attractive. It is the nature of temptation to make sinful things seem the more attractive, and it is the fallen nature of humans that seeks or succumbs to the attraction. Ancient Orthodox Catholic Apostolic Christians reject the position that the descendants of Adam and Eve are guilty of the original sin of their ancestors. But just as any species begets its own kind, so fallen humans beget fallen humans, and from the beginning of humanity's existence, man and woman lie open to sinning by their own choice. Since the fall of man, it has been mankind's dilemma that no human can restore his nature to union with God's grace; it was necessary for God to affect another change in human nature.

The Ancient Orthodox Catholic Apostolic Church teaches that the Christ is both God and Man absolutely and completely: eternally begotten of the Father in His divinity, He was born of a woman, the Theotokos, known also as Christotokos, through descent of the Holy Spirit. He lived on Earth, in time and history, as God and Man. As God and Man, He also died and descended to the Place of the Dead, which is Hades.

But being God, neither Death nor Hades could contain Him, and He rose to life again in His humanity, by the power of the Holy Spirit, thus destroying the power of Hades, and of Death himself. Through God's participation in humanity, the Christ ascended into Heaven, there to reign at the right hand of God the Father. By these acts of salvation, the Christ provided mankind with the path to escape succumbing to the fallen spirit; He also served as the New or Last Adam, whereby humanity is shown the way to fulfill what Adam and Eve initially failed to fulfill—governing the perfected and restored world in God's power and understanding, and caretaking for the same while in the direct and tangible presence of God.

The Ancient Orthodox Catholic Apostolic Church teaches that through baptism into the Christ's death, and humanity's death unto sin in repentance, with God's help humanity can also rise with Jesus the Christ into Heaven, only as the children of God mankind was made to be as explained prior—being healed of the breach of man's inclination to sin, and restored to God's grace. To the Ancient Orthodox Catholic Apostolic Church of Christ, this process is what is meant by "salvation", which consists of the Christian life on Earth.

The ultimate goal of a member of the Church, as decreed in council and written of prior, is reaching the “Adamic state”—an even closer union with God by constant daily devotion and refraining from almost all worldly ways (a lesser form of monasticism). Through the Christ’s destruction of Hades power to hold humanity hostage, He made the path to salvation effective for all the righteous who had died from the beginning of time—saving many, including Adam and Eve, who are remembered in the Church as saints.

The Ancient Orthodox Catholic Apostolic Church rejects the idea that the Christ died to give God “satisfaction”, become a punitive substitute, or even be a creation with the divine purpose of sacrifice and nothing else—something taught by the most heretical of churches claiming the Christ.

Sin (separation from God, the source of all life and true happiness) is its own punishment, capable of imprisoning the soul in an existence without life, without anything good, and without hope. Life on Earth is a gift from God to give humanity an opportunity to make their choice real: separation from Him, or union to Him.

Members are tasked with evangelizing across the world that others may desire to change their choice, in order to be united in fellowship with the Triune God.

The Church of Christ proclaims that the Virgin Mary is indeed the Mother of God, as she bore God Incarnate. She is honored within the Church as the Theotokos, or God-bearer; she is also honored as Christotokos, or Christ-bearer. The Theotokos is pre-eminent among all, and the fulfillment of the Old Testament archetypes revealed in the Ark of the Covenant (because she carried the New Covenant in the person of the Christ) and the burning bush that appeared before Moses (symbolizing the Mother of God’s carrying of God without being consumed).

Accordingly, the Church considers Mary to be the Ark of the New Covenant and give her the respect and reverence as such. The Theotokos was chosen by God and she freely co-operated in that choice to be the Mother of Jesus the Christ, the Lord and Savior of humanity and all creation, thus being the Christotokos as stated prior.

In matters of life and death, the Church believes death and the separation of body and soul to be unnatural—a result of man’s fall. The Church also holds that the worship of the Church (or the local individual church) comprises both the living and the dead.

All persons currently in Heaven are considered to be saints, whether their names are known or not. There are, however, those saints of distinction whom God has revealed as particularly good examples.

Numerous saints are celebrated on each day of the year. They are shown great respect and love, but not worshiped, for worship is due God alone. In showing the saints this love and requesting their prayers, as the Church teaches they are alive in Heaven and do God's extended work above, the Church manifests her belief that the saints thus assist in the process of salvation for others by providing encouragement from Heaven in their conversations with God pertaining to a person, or in their writings.

The Church of Christ believes that when a person dies the soul is temporarily separated from the body. Though it may linger for a short period on Earth, it is ultimately escorted either to Paradise or the darkness of Hades, following the Temporary Judgment—or to the Throne of God with all detachments severed, being similar to the days Jesus walked until His ascension. Whether the souls of those who were preached to by the Lord Incarnate in Paradise were carried with Him to the Throne, and all souls subsequently await being carried to the Throne themselves; or whether they remained in Abraham's Bosom still is unknown and not dogmatically decreed. Additionally, Ancient Orthodox Catholic Apostolic Christians do not accept the doctrine of Purgatory, which is held by Roman Catholicism, nor the Toll Houses of Orthodox Catholicism. The ultimate, individual goal for all should be the Throne of God.

The soul's experience of either of those states—Paradisial Heaven in Abraham's Bosom, or Hades—is decreed to be only a “foretaste”—being experienced only by the soul—until the Final Judgment, when the soul and body will be reunited. The Church teaches the state of the soul in Hades can be affected by the love and prayers of the righteous up until the Last Judgment. For this reason, the Ancient Orthodox Catholic Apostolic Church offers a special prayer for the departed on each day of liturgical celebration. There are also several days throughout the year that are set aside for general commemoration of the departed. These days usually fall on a Saturday, since it was on a Saturday that the Christ lay in the Holy Sepulcher.

Pertaining to the text of the Apocalypse (Book of Revelation), which the Church deems to be a part of Scripture, it is regarded to be a mystery. Speculation on the contents of Revelation are minimal, and it is never read as part of the regular order of liturgy. The bishops of the Church of Christ who have delved into its pages tend to be premillennialist or even amillennialist in their eschatology, believing that the “thousand years” spoken of in biblical prophecy refers to the present time: from the Crucifixion of the Christ until the Second Coming.

The Church further believes that Hell, though often described in metaphor as punishment inflicted by God, is in reality the soul's rejection of God's infinite love which

is offered freely and abundantly to everyone, while also acknowledging it as the final destination of the damned, more commonly known as the Lake of Fire. In the end, the Ancient Orthodox Catholic Apostolic Church proclaims by the Scriptures that all souls will be reunited with their resurrected bodies and fully experience their eternity.

Having been perfected, the saints will forever progress towards a deeper and fuller love of God, which equates with eternal happiness while residing on a new, sinless Earth in a restored cosmos, that is, the universe. These saints will labor, protect and expand their jurisdiction as originally intended through Adam and Eve; and they will enjoy the fruits of these labors. Having been condemned, the damned will perish in their transgressions, being cast away from all holiness in Hell with those angels that rebelled against the Lord their God, and creator.

Further pertaining to Hell, the Ancient Orthodox Catholic Apostolic Church accepts that this eternal darkness is made of various stairs and corridors. The first is the Lake of Fire, to which the souls of the damned shall be cast after the Divine Judgment of God. It may also be referred to as Gehenna, which is also the physical place where children were unduly sacrificed, cursing the land. The second is the Land of Tartarus, the abode of the fallen angels and their descendants, the Nephilim. The two stairs and greater corridors of Hell make known their witness to God's righteous might. Yet, Hades and Tartarus will be consumed in the Lake of Fire; and, it can be speculated that the souls—after their punishments by being whipped with many or fewer stripes—may return to God after their judgment in the ages has ended. They could either be restored wholly as a reconciliation of all things; or, they could simply return to God and be forbidden from being unveiled as a whole being after being purged.

Nevertheless, it is believed that the presence of God should nonetheless be the primary motive rather than willful separation from Him; for though the wages of sin is indeed death, God is just and the Lake of Fire in this second death may be a death to the self for the fullest corrective measurement in being repurposed into the original mandate by returning to God for a mysterious reason unrevealed, instead of pure annihilationism; and, the fire would continually burn as Holy Scripture teaches for the sake of the plentitude of souls and fallen angels being purged of their sins which for some may extend for an indefinite period of time.

ARTICLE 5 – EFFECTIVITY

The Ancient Orthodox Catholic Apostolic Church marks the effective date for the Ancient Orthodox Catholic Apostolic Statute to be 24 September 2019 (in the Year of the Lord).

All members and institutions of the Church are required by canon and secular law to conform to the policies herein, in order to express more fully the oneness in the Christ of all bodies composing her, to make effective their common witness in Him, and to serve His Kingdom in the world until His Second Coming.

Violators of the Statute shall be duly trialed and judged according to this, and those lesser canons, that she be preserved as promised.

GLORY TO THE LORD GOD IN ALL THINGS!