**Salvation of Non-Believers and of the Unbaptized**

**From the Holy Scriptures and in the Sayings of the Early Church Fathers**

 **By Metropolitan Bishoy of Damiette**

 **Coptic Orthodox Church**

Part I: Salvation of Non-Believers

**Proofs from the Holy Scriptures Including the Teaching of Our Lord Jesus Christ that there is No Salvation for Non-Believers:**

* *“He* ***who believes*** *and is baptized will be saved; but* ***he who does not believe will be condemned****”* (Mar 16:16).
* “*But if that servant says in his heart, My master is delaying his coming,' and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and be drunk, the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in two and* ***appoint him his portion with the unbelievers***” (Luk 12:45,46 NKJ).
* *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that* ***whoever believes*** *in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He who believes in Him is not condemned; but* ***he who does not believe is condemned*** *already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God”* (Joh 3:16-18 NKJ)
* “*He who* ***believes*** *in the Son has everlasting life; and* ***he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him***” (John 3:36).
* “*Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and* ***believes*** *in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life*” (Joh 5:24 NKJ).
* “*Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for* ***if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins***” (Joh 8:24 NKJ).
* “*My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And* ***I give them eternal life****, and they shall never perish*” (Joh 10:27-28 NKJ).
* “*I am the resurrection and the life. He who* ***believes*** *in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die*” (Joh 11:25-26 NKJ).
* “***I am the way, the truth, and the life.******No one comes to the Father except through Me***” (John 14: 6).
* “***And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus******Christ*** *whom You have sent*” (Joh 17:3 NKJ).
* “*Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice*” (Joh 18:37 NKJ).
* “*But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the* ***righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ****, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; for* ***all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God***” (Rom 3:21-23 NKJ).
* “*For* ***whom He foreknew****, He also predestined… Moreover whom He predestined, these* ***He also called***” (Rom 8:29-30 NKJ)
* “*But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded,* ***who do not believe***” (2Co 4:3-4 NKJ).
* “**But without faith it is impossible to please Him**, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him” (Heb 11:6 NKJ).
* “***Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either****; he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also*” (1Jo 2:23 NKJ).
* “***Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God***” (1Jo 4:15 NKJ).
* “*He who* ***believes*** *in the Son of God has the witness in himself;* ***he who does not believe God has******made Him a liar****, because he has* ***not believed*** *the testimony that God has given of His Son. And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life;* ***he who does not have the Son of God does not have life***” (1Jo 5:10-12 NKJ).
* “*These things I have written to you* ***who believe*** *in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you* ***have eternal life****, and that you may* ***continue to believe*** *in the name of the Son of God*” (1Jo 5:13 NKJ).
* “*And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in* ***His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life***” (1Jo 5:20 NKJ).

**Sayings of Early Holy Church Fathers:**

**The Apostolic Constitutions** state:

“**By believing in Him you will live, but by disbelieving, you will be punished**, for “*he that, is disobedient to the Son will not see life.*”[[1]](#footnote-1)

**Saint Cyprian** (d. 258 A.D.)wrote:

 “**It is impossible to reach the Father except by His Son Jesus Christ**”.[[2]](#footnote-2)

**Saint Cyprian** againwrote:

“It is clear that the devil is driven out in baptism **by the faith of the believer**. And if that faith should fail afterwards, he returns.”[[3]](#footnote-3)

**Saint Athanasius of Alexandria** about heathen worshipers wrote:

“**How then can they fail to be judged godless by all, who even by the divine Scripture are accused of impiety**? or how can they be anything but miserable, who are thus openly convicted of worshipping dead things instead of the truth? or **what kind of hope have they**? or what kind of excuse could be made for them, trusting in things without sense or movement, which they reverence in place of the true God?”[[4]](#footnote-4)

**Saint Athanasius** wrote:

“As then he that reasons in such a way **is mad, and beyond all madness**, even so affected in mind, I think, are those who do not recognize God or worship His Word, our Lord Jesus Christ the Savior of all, through Whom the Father orders, and holds together all things, and exercises providence over the Universe; having faith and piety towards Whom, my Christ-loving friend, be of good cheer and of good hope, because immortality and the kingdom of heaven is the fruit of faith and devotion towards Him, if only the soul be adorned according to His laws. For just as for them who walk after His example, **the prize is life everlasting, so for those who walk the opposite way, and not that of virtue, there is great shame, and peril without pardon in the day of judgment**.”[[5]](#footnote-5)

**Saint Cyril of Alexandria** wrote:

“**For they who believe not must surely die in their sins**. And that death in transgressions is an heavy burden, because it will deliver the soul of man unto the all-devouring flame, none may doubt… **And not only does He say that one ought to believe but affirms that it must needs be on Him**. For **we are justified by believing on Him** as on God from God, as on the Saviour and Redeemer and King of all and Lord in truth. Therefore he says, Ye shall perish***if ye believe not that I am***.”[[6]](#footnote-6)

**Saint Gregory Nazienzen** wrote:

“They that have done good shall go into the resurrection of life, now hid in Christ and to be manifested hereafter with Him, and they that have done evil, into the resurrection of judgment, **to which they who have not believed have been condemned** already by the word which judges them.”[[7]](#footnote-7)

**Some Viewpoints Accepting the Salvation of Non-Believers; With Which We Disagree:**

There is a viewpoint maintaining that those who have not believed in the Lord Christ, as God and savior, including Hindus, Buddhists and others, can share in the paschal mystery and the mystery of the resurrection. It is also argued that their salvation is attained in a manner known to God alone. It is also claimed that some of them search for the unknown God (that is, the One True God Whom they do not know) in shadows and images.

The viewpoint continues to say that those, through no fault of their own, who have no knowledge of Christ or His Church can obtain eternal salvation and that this is possible if they search for God with a sincere heart and, under the influence of grace, try to put into effect the will of God as known to them through the dictate of conscience.

The viewpoint even goes further to affirm that in Hinduism, the divine mystery is explored and propounded with an inexhaustible wealth of myths and penetrating philosophical investigations. It also claims that liberation is sought from the distresses of our state, either through various forms of ascetical life, deep meditation, or taking refuge in God with loving confidence. Moreover, in Buddhism, according to its various forms, the radical inadequacy of this changeable world is acknowledged. A way is taught whereby those with a devout and trustful spirit may be able to reach either a state of perfect freedom or, relying on their own efforts or on help from a higher source, the highest illumination.

**Our Answer to these Viewpoints:**

Such viewpoints can become deep blows against the Christian faith. It undermines the commitment to the ministry of the death of Christ, His resurrection, and its durability for the sake of evangelism of His gospel. Our teacher Saint Paul the Apostle wrote to his disciple Timothy: “*Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my gospel, for which I suffer trouble as an evildoer, even to the point of chains; but the word of God is not chained.* ***Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory***” (2 Tim.2: 8-10). In the aforementioned verse, it is clear that Saint Paul considers it necessary for eternal salvation, that the evangelism of the gospel reaches those elected through the apostles who are servants of the word of God. Concerning those elected, he also wrote: “…*just as He* ***chose us in Him*** *before the foundation of the world* ***that we should be holy***” (Eph. 1:4). He also said: “*And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.* ***For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son****, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover* ***whom He predestined, these He also called****; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified*” (Rom.8: 28-30).

From what is stated by Saint Paul the Apostle, it is evident that God knew His children before the foundation of the world. They are called according to His purpose, **because though His foreknowledge, God knew that they would accept His call**. It is impossible that God will not call someone who is ready to accept His call; since it is written in the Bible “***Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save***” (Is. 59:1).

**Biblical Arguments used to Support these Viewpoints and Our Responses:**

1) One argument uses the verse mentioned in the Epistle of Saint Paul to the Romans in which he wrote: **“…*these, although not having the law are a law to themselves*”** (Rom. 2:14).

Our answer is that this particular verse, if read in its full context, demonstrates the opposite. The full text is as follows: “**…*for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves”*** *This means that when the Gentiles carried out the commandments contained in the written Law of Moses (according to the law of nature in their hearts, since they did not have the Law of Moses itself), they became a law unto themselves, through the moral law of their nature. This moral law of nature coincides with the Divine Law. This is the result of a sum-total. It means that in both cases man was asked to follow the commandment whether he had the Law of Moses or not. This is what the apostle emphasized when he wrote: “For as many as have sinned without law will also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law*” (Rom. 2: 12).

It is entirely unacceptable to say that the Gentiles had the freedom to follow private laws which are against the Divine Law. If a gentile killed he deserved judgment, if a Jew killed, he also deserved judgment; there was no distinction between the two.

Furthermore, all that was mentioned regarding this subject of the Law in the Epistle to the Romans, chapters two and three, concerns both the Gentiles and the Jews before the coming of the Savior. It does not apply to the new covenant. Hence, when Saint Paul soon after spoke of the new covenant, he addressed something completely different. He said: “*But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*” (Rom. 3:21-23).

**2)** Another argument misapplies what our teacher Saint Peter the apostle wrote, when he said: “***But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him***” (Acts 10: 35).

In response, we say that Saint Peter spoke these words in the house of Cornelius the gentile, where he went to evangelize and to preach about Christ. He meant to say that God shows no partiality between the Jews and the Gentiles. He also intended to demonstrate that all nationalities are accepted before Him, **if they believe in Christ**. The verse begins as follows: “*In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him*” (Acts 10:35). He means that faith is for the Jews, as well as the Gentiles. Moreover, we should remember that the remainder of the apostles disagreed with Peter for entering the house of Cornelius the gentile. They did not easily accept the admittance of the Gentiles into the faith. It was not until Saint Peter the Apostle related all that God had manifested and organized concerning Cornelius, that they accepted. Thus the Apostles said: **“*Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life*”** (Acts 11: 18).

Who can do what is righteous? Is it not he of whom it is said: “*Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness*” (Rom. 4:3)? Saint Paul the Apostle wrote: “*Therefore,* ***having been justified by faith****, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ*” (Rom. 5:1). He also said: “*But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God****, through faith in Jesus Christ***” (Rom. 3:21-22). Moreover, he writes “…*to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the* ***justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus***” (Rom. 3:26).

Saint Paul also says: “…*since there is one God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith*” (Rom. 3:30). Consequently, there is no righteousness except through faith in Christ. Any other attempt at righteousness may cause delay to the faith. Similarly, when the Jews sought to prove their own righteousness they did not attain it. In Romans 9:30-32, we read: “*That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even* ***the righteousness of faith****; but Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness. Why? Because* ***they did not seek it******by faith****, but as it were, by the works of the law.*”

1. When Saint Paul was in Athens and saw the city given over to idols, his spirit was provoked as a result of his intense hatred for idolatry (cf. Acts 17:16). However, among the idolatrous altars, he saw **an altar having no idol, image, or name of a specific god inscribed upon it**. Rather, its inscription was ‘**for the unknown God’**; that is a god unknown to the Athenians. He considered this an opportunity through which he could begin preaching to them about the One True God. Thus, he mentioned to those present, that he had seen this altar and addressed them saying: “…*the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you. God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. Nor is He worshipped with man’s hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things*” (Acts 17: 23-25).

Those who contend that Saint Paul did not forbid worshipping God through idols; may refer to above-mentioned section in the book of the Acts, using it as a means to justify the false worship of God, for those who seek the unknown God through images and shadows. How can this incorrect notion be attributed to Saint Paul, whose spirit was provoked within him when he saw the city given over to idols.

1. A further argument states that adequate preaching did not reach some people, therefore we have clarified, using Biblical references, that God assuredly calls His elect. He “*did not leave Himself without witness*” (Acts 14:17). God can use men in preaching. Likewise, He can ask the service of His angels; for the Bible states: “*Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?*” (Heb.1:14). An angel appeared to Cornelius (cf. Acts 10) because he was a virtuous man, guiding him to the right path, i.e. to listen to Saint Peter’s teaching, which he did, believed and was baptized with his household. An angel of the Lord also spoke to Philip (Acts 8:26-39) and asked him to go toward the south along the road which goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza (Act 8:26 NKJ), which he did, met the Ethiopian eunuch, preached and baptized him after he believed in Christ, then the angel caught Philip away.

On the other hand, of the Gentiles who did not believe in the true God, it is written: “…***because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead,******so that******they are without excuse****, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God* ***into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things****. Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves,* ***who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator****, who is blessed forever. Amen*” (Rom. 1:19-25).

The Biblical text concerning the Gentiles, “***they are without excuse*”** is quite clear and does not require comment.

We have clarified how God calls those whom He knows will accept His call, because their hearts are prepared to accept the truth (see Rom. 8:28-30). Concerning those who do not accept the call of God, although it reaches them, Saint Paul the Apostle said: “*But even if our gospel is veiled, it is* ***veiled to those who are perishing****, whose minds the* ***god of this age****[[8]](#footnote-8) has blinded,* ***who do not believe****, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them*” (2 Cor. 4:3-4). There is no occasion for arguing that they do not understand, because the Lord Jesus Christ had said, **“*Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice*”** (John 18: 37).

Generally speaking, our teacher Saint Paul the Apostle says: “*But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed our report?” So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.* ***But I say, have they not heard? Yes indeed: “Their sound has gone out to all the earth, And their words to the ends of the world***” (Rom. 10:16-18). Therefore, there is no place for an excuse concerning unbelief.

**What Becomes of Those Who Do Not Obey the Gospel:**

With regard to those who do not obey the Gospel, our teacher Saint Paul wrote: “…*since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire* ***taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ****. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed*” (2 Thes. 1:6-10).

**Saint Paul, when describing how the Lord Christ appeared to him as he was going to persecute the Christians in Damascus, told King Agrippa:** “*And when we all had fallen to the ground, I heard a voice speaking to me and saying in the* ***Hebrew language****, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads. So I said, ‘Who are You, Lord?’ And He said, I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But rise and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose,* ***to make you*** *a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you. I will deliver you from* ***the Jewish people****, as well as from* ***the Gentiles****,* ***to whom I now send you****, to open their eyes, in order to turn them* ***from darkness to light****, and* ***from the power of Satan to God****, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified* ***by faith in Me****. Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, but declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and then to the* *Gentiles, that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance*” (Acts 26:14-20).

**From what Saint Paul said, it is evident that those who did not hear of Christ are**:

1. Blind: “*to open their eyes*”

2. In darkness: “*to turn them from darkness*”

3. Under the power of Satan; “*from the power of Satan*”

4. Away from God: “*to turn them… to God*”

5. Non-believers in Christ: “*they may receive… by faith in me*”

6. Their sins are not yet forgiven: “*may receive forgiveness of sins*”

1. “*They have no share with the sanctified*”. This means that they may receive an inheritance in the community of the holy church, in paradise of joy, and also in the eternal inheritance when the heavenly kingdom is declared. All this will happen if they believe in Christ and enter into the community of the church through the holy sacraments.
2. They should repent: “*they should repent turn to God*”.
3. They should do works befitting repentance: “*do works befitting repentance*”. In these aspects there is no difference between the people of Damascus, Jerusalem, Judea, or the Gentiles. All are called to return to God, through faith in Jesus Christ.

**The Biblical Opinion Towards Heathen Religions:**

The Holy Scriptures are a witness against the aforementioned assumptions concerning the salvation of non-believers and heathen worshipers, which are in fact a worship of Satan. Saint Paul said “***Rather, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons*”** (1Cor. 10:20).

Concerning God, the Psalmist said: “*Let all be put to shame who serve carved images, Who boast of idols. Worship Him, all you gods*” (Ps. 97:7). When the people of Israel were affected by the heathen Gentiles, God said in anguish: “*They made a calf in Horeb, And worshiped the molded image. Thus they changed their glory into the image of an ox that eats grass. They forgot God their Savior, Who had done great things in Egypt…. But they mingled with the Gentiles And learned their works; They served their idols, Which became a snare to them. They even sacrificed their sons And their daughters to demons, And shed innocent blood, The blood of their sons and daughters, Whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan; And the land was polluted with blood. Thus they were defiled by their own works, And played the harlot by their own deeds*” (Ps. 106: 19-21, 35-39).

How hideous was the heathen worship in the eyes of God in the old covenant. This is even more displeasing to God in the covenant of grace and the knowledge of salvation!

**The Biblical Opinion Concerning the Jews in the Apostolic Era:**

In the Epistle to the Thessalonians, Saint Paul the Apostle wrote to the believers who were being persecuted by non-believers in Thessalonica saying: “*For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God which are in Judea in Christ Jesus. For you also suffered the same things from your own countrymen, just as they did from the Judeans, who killed both the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they do not please God and are contrary to all men, forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they may be saved, so as always to fill up the measure of their sins; but wrath has come upon them to the uttermost*” (1 Thes. 2: 14-16).

It is astonishing that some denominations praise the Jews, rather than calling them to repentance through faith in Christ, whom their fathers rejected. Yet, the Jews continue in their evil ways, and remain in enmity with all people. Consequently, Saint Paul stated that they: “*are contrary to all men.*” For this reason, we cannot say that those who have not yet accepted the gospel are related to the people of God in various ways.

**Saint Cyprian’s Opinion Concerning the Jews**:

“By this alone can the Jews obtain pardon of their sins: if they wash away the blood of the slain Christ in His baptism, come into the church, and obey His commandments”[[9]](#footnote-9)

Part II: Salvation of the Unbaptized

**Theological Indications Deduced from Christ’s Baptism:**

 “*Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him.* *And John tried to prevent Him, saying, I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me? But Jesus answered and said to him,* ***Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness****. Then he allowed Him. When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold,* ***the heavens were opened*** *to Him, and He saw the* ***Spirit of God descending*** *like a dove and alighting upon Him. And suddenly* ***a voice came from heaven****, saying, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased”* (Mat 3:13-17 NKJ).

At the beginning of His ministry our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, established the sacrament of baptism in the name of the Holy Trinity.

Our Lord Jesus Christ Who is not in need of baptism came to John the Baptist to become baptized in the Jordan. He told John the Baptist “*Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness*”. The reason for this can be nothing but that our Lord wanted to become an example and a pattern for us, He wanted to establish the sacrament of Baptism, and to clarify that it should be in the name of the Holy Trinity.

While coming up from the water, the voice of the Father came from heaven and the Holy Spirit descending like a dove alighted upon Him. The Holy Spirit could have descended and alighted upon Him by any other way and at any other incident, but He wanted to make us understand that baptism is what opens the heavens and makes the Holy Spirit descend upon us.

In the old, during the days of Joshua, it was written, “*So it was, when the people set out from their camp to cross over the Jordan, with the priests bearing the ark of the covenant before the people, and as those who bore the ark came to the Jordan, and the feet of the priests who bore the ark dipped in the edge of the water (for the Jordan overflows all its banks during the whole time of harvest), that the waters which came down from upstream stood still, and rose in a heap very far away at Adam, the city that is beside Zaretan. So the waters that went down into the Sea of the Arabah, the Salt Sea, failed, and were cut off; and the people crossed over opposite Jericho*” (Jos 3:14-16 NKJ).

Now, when the feet of the priests who bore the ark of the covenant dipped in the edge of the water of the Jordan, the waters were cut off and the people crossed and were able to enter into the promised land. And *here,* the real ark of the covenant is seen in the waters of the Jordan, so what happened? The heavens opened! Thus, verifying that baptism is the way for the heavenly eternal inheritance. When the people in the old crossed the Jordan they reached the promised land, but *now,* we are crossing not to reach an earthly land but to reach to the heavens itself. This is why we say that by baptism our Lord was opening the way to heaven. Therefore, how can we say that baptism is not essential for salvation.

At the beginning of His ministry our Lord Jesus Christ established the Sacrament of Baptism with the Sacrament of Chrism and at the end of His ministry, before His crucifixion, He established the Sacrament of the Eucharist by telling His disciples, “*This is My body which is given for you;* ***do this in remembrance of Me***” (Luk 22:19 NKJ).

When our Lord Christ fulfilled the redemption act on the cross and resurrected from the dead He gave His disciples the grace of priesthood and of the remission of sins fulfilled through the Sacrament of Confession. It is written, “*So Jesus said to them again, Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you. And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained*” (Joh 20:21-23 NKJ). This He did, “*having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek*” (Heb 6:20 NKJ). Thus, He gave His disciples the Sacrament of Priesthood and Confession in order to give them the Sacrament of the Eucharist.

**Some Biblical References Expounding Baptism**

Baptism is essential for the salvation of the soul (Mk 16:16; Jn 3:5; Rom 6:3-11), since it is burial and resurrection with Christ (Col 2:12-13; Tit 3:5), a regeneration (Jn 1:12,13; Jn 3:3-5), by which we renew our corrupted nature, wash our sins (Acts 2:38), be granted the gift of the Holy Spirit (Act 22:16; 2Cor 1:21-22; 1Pe 3:21); put on Christ (Gal 3:27), become the adopted sons of God (1Pe 1:1-5), become members in the one body of Christ (1Cor 12:13; Eph 4:4-5), and become the property of God (1Pe 2:9,10). Baptism is an act of repentance (Acts 2:38; 3:19) and a confession of faith (Heb 10:22). Baptism is the goal of preaching (Act 2:37-41).

Baptism should be with water and spirit (Mat 3:11), by three immersions in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (Mat 28:19), after confessing the true faith and renouncing Satan.

Moreover, it is well known that without faith, no person can escape the wrath of God: “*He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him*” (John 3:36). Baptism is the condition required both to enter into, and see the kingdom of God. “*Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God…Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God*” (John 3:3-5). Without baptism, how can one obtain the resurrected body with spiritual eyes, through which he will inherit the kingdom and see its glory?

In the Old Testament, we also find prototypes for baptism, in the story of the flood during the time of Noah (cf. 1Pe 3:20) and the story of the crossing of the red sea (cf. 1Co 10:1,2).

**Biblical Incidents Proving the Necessity of Baptism**

In the New Testament, our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, made baptism a necessary condition for salvation. In His commission to His disciples He said, “*Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.* ***He who believes and is baptized will be saved****; but he who does* *not believe will be condemned*” (Mk 16:15-16 NKJ). Here Our Lord Jesus Himself said that one must be baptized in order to be saved. He didn't say that belief by itself results in salvation but that faith, accompanied by baptism, brings salvation.

Correspondingly, our Lord commanded His disciples saying, “*Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations,* ***baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit***” (Mat 28:19 NKJ). Furthermore, emphasizing the importance of baptism our Lord Jesus Christ said to Nicodemus “*Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is* ***born of water and the Spirit****, he cannot enter the kingdom of God*” (Joh 3:5 NKJ).

The Book of Acts mentions numerous incidents where unbelievers heard the gospel and those who believed immediately had to be baptized (cf. Acts 2:38;41; 8:12; 36; 10:47-48; 16:14-15; 30-33; 19:3-5; 22:16). The Holy Apostles included the necessity of water baptism in their gospel presentations making it a necessary condition for salvation. People were baptized in order to become Christians, in other words were only counted Christians when baptized.

We find an evidence for this is after Saint Peter’s first sermon, when those who believed asked “*what shall we do*”? He directly answered, “*Repent, and* ***let every one of you be baptized*** *in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit*” (Act 2:37-39 NKJ). Thus Saint Peter made water baptism necessary for salvation. Then it is written, “*Then those who gladly received his word* ***were baptized****; and that day about three thousand souls were* ***added*** *to them”* (Act 2:41 NKJ), how were the three thousand counted and added unless by being baptized? Later in the same chapter it is written, “*And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved*” (Act 2:47 NKJ).

Another evidence, is when Saint Philip preached the Ethiopian eunuch, and after he believed, he said, "*See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized? Then Philip said,* ***If you believe with all your heart, you may.*** *And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he* ***baptized him****. Now when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, so that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing*” (Act 8:36-39 NKJ). Firstly, this shows that faith is necessary before baptism. Secondly, if faith alone was enough why did they stop the chariot and go down into the water? Thirdly, why did the Spirit of the Lord wait until the eunuch was baptized then He caught Philip away?

An additional evidence, is the story of Cornelius, a centurion, who was a devout *man* and one who feared God with his household and gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always. This was not sufficient, therefore an angel appeared to Cornelius telling him “*your prayer has been heard, and your alms are remembered in the sight of God. Send therefore to Joppa and call Simon here, whose surname is Peter. He is lodging in the house of Simon, a tanner, by the sea. When he comes, he will speak to you*” (Act 10:31-32 NKJ). At the same time Saint Peter saw a vision, the messengers of Cornelius reached him, and he went with them. Saint Peter preached Cornelius and his household, then it is written, “*While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word. And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God. Then Peter answered, Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have? And he* ***commanded them to be baptized*** *in the name of the Lord. Then they asked him to stay a few days*” (Act 10:44-48 NKJ). It is very evident in this story that being a devout person who always prays and give alms is not sufficient, believing and even receiving the Holy Spirit is not sufficient, but they had to be baptized as Saint Peter commanded.

An extra evidence is: The keeper of the prison in Philippi after bringing out Paul and Silas from prison said, “*Sirs, what must I do to be saved? So they said,* ***Believe*** *on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household. Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes. And immediately he and all his family* ***were baptized***” (Act 16:30-33 NKJ). The prison keeper asked “*what must I do to be saved*”, they told him that he had to believe, and he believed but it is written that “*immediately he and all his family were baptized”*. Therefore it was not enough that they believed, they had to be baptized.

Another example: When Saint Paul found disciples in Ephesus, he asked them, “*Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed? So they said to him, We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit. And he said to them, Into what then were you baptized? So they said, Into John's baptism. Then Paul said, John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard this,* ***they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus***” (Act 19:2-5 NKJ). This incident proves the necessity baptism on the name of Jesus Christ not any other baptism, even of him whom Jesus Christ said: “*among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist*” (Mat 11:11 NKJ).

The abovementioned examples prove the necessity of water baptism. It is clearly noted that both our Lord Jesus Christ and His Apostles taught that water baptism is a necessary condition for salvation.

**Few Verses and Sayings of the Early Holy Church Fathers Highlighting the Necessity of Baptism for the Salvation of the Soul:**

“*I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire*” (Mat 3:11 NKJ).

*“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”* (Mat 28:19 NKJ).

“*He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned*” (Mar 16:16 NKJ)

*“But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God”* (Joh 1:12-13 NKJ).

 “*Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God*” (Joh 3:5 NKJ).

“*Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit*” (Act 2:38 NKJ).

 “*Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life*” (Rom 6:3-5 NKJ).

*“not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit*” (Tit 3:5 NKJ).

“*buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses*” (Col 2:12-13 NKJ).

*“Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord”* (Act 3:19 NKJ).

**Justin Martyr** (100-165 A.D.)wrote:

“But there is no other [way] than this: to **become acquainted with this Christ**, to be **washed in the fountain** spoken of by Isaiah for the remission of sins, and for the rest, to live sinless lives”.[[10]](#footnote-10)

**The Council of Carthage** (256 A.D.) states**:**

“Unless therefore they receive **saving baptism** in the Catholic Church, which is one, they cannot be saved, but will be condemned with the carnal in the judgment of the Lord Christ.”[[11]](#footnote-11)

**Saint Cyprian** wrote:

“From [baptism] springs the whole origin of faith, the saving access to the hope of life eternal, and the divine condescension for purifying and quickening the servants of God.”[[12]](#footnote-12)

**Saint Augustine** (354-430 A.D.) calls baptism:

“The sacrament of eternal salvation.”[[13]](#footnote-13)

**Saint Kyril of Jerusalem** (313-386 A.D.) wrote**:**

“If any man receive not Baptism, he hath not salvation.”[[14]](#footnote-14)

**Saint Gregory Nazianzen** (329-390 A.D.), because of its importance in the early churchgave Baptism the following titles:

“We call it, the Gift, the Grace, Baptism, Unction, Illumination, the Clothing of Immortality, the Laver of Regeneration, the Seal, and everything that is honourable”[[15]](#footnote-15)

**Conditions for a Sound Baptism**

1. **Baptism In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit**

*“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*” (Mat 28:19 NKJ).

**Justin Martyr** (100-165 A.D.)wrote:

“For, in the name of God, the Father and Lord of the universe, and of our Savior Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit, they then receive the washing with water.” [[16]](#footnote-16)

**Saint Athanasius** (296-373 A.D.) wrote:

“He who misappropriates something from the Holy Trinity and is baptized only in the Name of the Father or only in the Name of the Son or without the Holy Spirit but only in the Father and the Son, does not receive anything but remains empty and imperfect. For the perfection is achieved only in the Holy Trinity.”[[17]](#footnote-17)

**Saint Kyril of Alexandria** (378-444) wrote:

“We have been baptized truly in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”[[18]](#footnote-18)

1. **Baptism With Water**

“*Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is* ***born of water and the Spirit****, he cannot enter the kingdom of God*” (Joh 3:5 NKJ).

“*Can anyone forbid* ***water****, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord*” (Act 10:47, 48 NKJ).

 “*let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our* ***hearts sprinkled*** *from an evil conscience and* ***our bodies washed with pure water***” (Heb 10:22 NKJ).

**Saint Kyril of Jerusalem** also wrote:

“Neither doth he that is baptized with water, but not found worthy of the Spirit, receive the grace in perfection; nor **if a man be virtuous in his deeds, but receive not the seal by water, shall he enter into the kingdom of heaven**.” [[19]](#footnote-19)

**John Chrysostom** (347-407 A.D.)wrote:

If any inquire, “Why is water included?” let us also in return ask, “Wherefore was earth employed at the beginning in the creation of man?”... That the need of water is absolute and indispensable, you may learn in this way. On one occasion, when the Spirit had flown down before the water was applied, the Apostle did not stay at this point, but, as though the water were necessary and not superfluous, observe what he says; “Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?” (Acts 10:47) What then is the use of the water?... In Baptism are fulfilled the pledges of our covenant with God; burial and death, resurrection and life; and these take place all at once. **For when we immerse our heads in the water, the old man is buried as in a tomb below**”.[[20]](#footnote-20)

1. **Baptism is Death and Resurrection with Christ**

“*Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were* ***baptized into His death****? Therefore we were* ***buried with Him through baptism*** *into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the* ***likeness of His death****, certainly we also shall be in the* ***likeness of His resurrection****, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord*” (Rom 6:3-11 NKJ).

“***buried with Him in baptism****, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead*” (Col 2:12 NKJ).

*“begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from* *the dead”* (1Pe 1:3 NKJ).

**Saint Cyprian** wrote:

“The blessed apostle sets forth and proves that baptism is that by which **the old man dies and the new man is born** saying, “He saved us by the washing of regeneration.”[[21]](#footnote-21)

**Saint Basil the Great** (330- 379 A.D.) wrote:

“For this cause the Lord, who is the Dispenser of our life, gave us the covenant of baptism, containing a type of life and death, for the water fulfills the image of death, and the Spirit gives us the earnest of life. Hence it follows that the answer to our question why the water was associated with the Spirit is clear: the reason is because in baptism two ends were proposed; on the one hand, the destroying of the body of sin, that it may never bear fruit unto death; on the other hand, our living unto the Spirit, and having our fruit in holiness; **the water receiving the body as in a tomb figures death, while the Spirit pours in the quickening power, renewing our souls from the deadness of sin unto their original life**.”[[22]](#footnote-22)

1. **Baptism is a Regeneration**

Saint Paul the Apostle wrote: “*not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the* ***washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit***” (Tit 3:5 NKJ).

“*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has* ***begotten us again*** *to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time*” (1Pe 1:3-5 NKJ).

**Justin Martyr** wrote:

“I will also relate the manner in which we dedicated ourselves to God when we had been made new through Christ; lest, if we omit this, we seem to be unfair in the explanation we are making. As many as are persuaded and believe that what we teach and say is true, and undertake to be able to live accordingly, are instructed to pray and to entreat God with fasting, for the remission of their sins that are past, we praying and fasting with them. Then **they are brought by us where there is water, and are regenerated** in the same manner in which we were ourselves regenerated.”[[23]](#footnote-23)

**Saint Cyprian** wrote:

“But as **the birth of Christians is in baptism**, while the generation and sanctification of baptism are with the spouse of Christ alone, who is able spiritually to conceive and to bear sons to God, where and of whom and to whom is he born, who is not a son of the Church, so as that he should have **God as his Father, before he has had the Church for his Mother**?”[[24]](#footnote-24)

1. **Baptism to Receive the Holy Spirit**

"*I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry.* ***He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit*** *and fire*” (Mat 3:11 NKJ).

“*Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has* ***anointed us*** *is God, who also has* ***sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee***” (2Co 1:21-22 NKJ).

“*In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were* ***sealed with the Holy Spirit*** *of promise, who is* ***the guarantee*** *of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory*” (Eph 1:13-14 NKJ).

“*And do not grieve the* ***Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed*** *for the day of redemption*” (Eph 4:30 NKJ).

**Firmilian Bishop of Caesarea Cappadocia** (d. 269) wrote:

“Let them consider and understand that spiritual birth cannot be without the Spirit; in conformity with which also the blessed Apostle Paul **baptized anew with a spiritual baptism** those who had already been baptized by John before the Holy Spirit had been sent by the Lord, and so laid hands on them that they might receive the Holy Ghost.” [[25]](#footnote-25)

**Saint Cyprian** wrote:

“By the help of the water of new birth, the stain of former years had been washed away and a light from above –serene and pure- had been infused into my reconciled heart. Then, **by the agency of the Spirit breathed from heaven, a second birth had restored me to a new man.**”[[26]](#footnote-26)

1. **Baptism for the Remission of sins**

“*Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ* ***for the remission of sins****; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit*” (Act 2:38 NKJ).

“*And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and* ***wash away your sins****, calling on the name of the Lord*” (Act 22:16 NKJ).

“*There is also an antitype which now saves us-- baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ*” (1Pe 3:21 NKJ).

**Saint Cyprian** wrote:

“The water then must first be cleansed and sanctified by the priest, that it may be able, by Baptism therein, **to wash away the sins** of the baptized.”[[27]](#footnote-27)

1. **Baptism to put on Christ**

“*For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have* ***put on Christ***” (Gal 3:27 NKJ).

**Saint Irenaeus** (130-200 A.D.) wrote:

“When [do we bear] the image of the heavenly? Doubtless when he says, ‘You have been washed’, believing in the name of the Lord and receiving His Spirit”[[28]](#footnote-28)

1. **Baptism to Become a Member of Christ**

*“For by one Spirit we were all* ***baptized into one body****-- whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free-- and have all been made to drink into one Spirit” (1Co 12:13 NKJ).*

**Saint Augustine** wrote:

“No one becomes a member of Christ except it be either by baptism in Christ, or death for Christ.”[[29]](#footnote-29)

1. **Baptism Cannot be Merely by Desire**

**Saint Gregory Nazianzen** wrote:

**“**But then, you say, is not God merciful, and since He knows our thoughts and searches out our desires, will He not take the desire of Baptism instead of Baptism? You are speaking in riddles, if what you mean is that because of God’s mercy the unenlightened is enlightened in His sight; and he is within the kingdom of heaven who merely desires to attain to it.”[[30]](#footnote-30)

**Ironically he adds:**

“If you judge the murderously disposed man by his will alone, apart from the act of murder, then you may reckon as baptized him who desired baptism apart from the reception of baptism. But if you cannot do the one how can you do the other? I cannot see it. Or, if you like, we will put it thus If desire in your opinion has equal power with actual baptism, then judge in the same way in regard to glory, and you may be content with longing for it, as if that were itself glory. And what harm is done you by your not attaining the actual glory, as long as you have the desire for it?”[[31]](#footnote-31)

From all the above mentioned conditions needed for a sound baptism, according to the Holy Scriptures and to the fathers, we conclude that baptism by desire or by eagerness is insufficient in the New Testament.

Regarding the patriarchs, prophets, righteous saints of the Old Testament, it is written that they rested in hope of the salvation. If baptism is unity with Christ in the likeness of His death and burial (Rom 6:5 NKJ), He was the one Who was buried with them in His death. The descent of Christ into hades after the cross is parallel with the descent of the righteous of the Old Testament for unity with Christ on the likeness of death and burial.

**Old Testament Believers:-**

Those old righteous fathers are considered buried with Christ especially in their crossing of the eternal sentence to death, since He Himself liberated them by descending into hades. It is written in the Psalm “*For You will not leave my soul in Sheol”* (Psa 16:10 NKJ). Saint Peter wrote, “*For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit,* ***by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison****… There is also an* ***antitype which now saves us—baptism, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ****”* (1Pe 3:18-19, 21 NKJ). Our Lord Christ transported their souls out of hades and brought them into paradise as a guarantee for the resurrection on the last day, in other words in hope of the resurrection. Moreover, “*many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many*” (cf. Mat 27:52,53). This has been a visual sign for the mystical union with the resurrected Christ. It was a guarantee for the resurrection in the last day of faithful of the Old Testament together with the saints of the New Testament.

**The Right-Hand Crucified Thief:**

The Thief who was crucified on the right hand of our Lord, died few hours after Christ’s death, but before His resurrection; therefore he had to enter hades, before our Lord took him the same day into paradise, since baptism is not only burial with Christ but also resurrection with Christ. Our Lord went to hades and preached the spirits in prison (cf. 1Pe 3:19), He spent three days in the other world before His resurrection because salvation and similarly baptism is a manifestation of the Holy Trinity. The right hand thief experienced the same path of salvation as the believers of the Old Testament.

1. **Baptism by Heretics and Christians not having the right faith is Rejected**

The true and sound faith is necessary for Baptism,since Saint Paul wrote**,** “*There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism*” (Eph 4:4,5 NKJ). Therefore, the early church rejected the baptism of heretics, and appointed adequate time for the catechumen not only to become acquainted with the true handed faith but also to stick steadfastly to it.

**Apostolic Constitutions and Canons state:**

“**Those that are baptized by them (heretics) are not initiated, but are polluted, not receiving the remission of sins, but the bond of impiety**.”[[32]](#footnote-32)

“If a bishop or presbyter rebaptizes him who has had true baptism, or does not baptize him who is polluted by the ungodly, let him be deprived”[[33]](#footnote-33)

**Saint Cyprian** wrote:

“**Remission of sins is not given, except in the Church; but that, with heretics, where the Church is not, sins cannot be remitted**. They, therefore, who claim that heretics can baptize, let them either change the interrogatory, or maintain the truth”[[34]](#footnote-34)

**Pope Saint Dionysius of Alexandria 14th** (d. 265)wrote:

“For, indeed, in the most considerable councils of the bishops, as I hear, it has been decreed that **they who come from heresy should first be trained in [Orthodox] doctrine, and then should be cleansed by baptism from the filth of the old and impure leaven**.”[[35]](#footnote-35)

**Pope Saint Athanasius of Alexandria** wrote:

“The Baptism, which is supposed to be given by them, is other than the truth, though they pretend to name the Name of the Father and the Son, because of the words of Scripture. For not he who simply says, ‘O Lord,’ gives Baptism; but he who with the Name has also **the right faith**. On this account therefore **our Savior also did not simply command to baptize, but first says, ‘Teach;’ then thus: ‘Baptize** into the Name of Father, and Son, and Holy Ghost;’ that **the right faith** might follow upon learning, and together with **faith** might come the consecration of Baptism… **many.. use the words only, but not in a right sense**, as I have said, nor with sound faith, and in consequence **the water which they administer is unprofitable, as deficient in piety, so that he who is sprinkled by them is rather polluted by irreligion than redeemed**.”[[36]](#footnote-36)

**A Brief Account about Baptismal Rituals and Controversies during the Early Christian Era:**

 “By mid-first century both Eucharist and baptism were seen as mystical initiations into the mystery of the death and resurrection. From the second century baptism was prepared for by long prayers and fasting in the period leading up to Pascha. The candidates were given a series of moral instructions (*Didache* 7; Justin, *First Apology* 61), and in several places (notably North Africa) the clergy subjected applicants to a severe series of “scrutinies” that investigated many aspects of their moral attitude and previous conduct. When the clergy were satisfied that the request for baptism accompanied a sincere desire to change lifestyle, the candidates were admitted to baptism and thence to Eucharistic communion. By the beginning of the third century, as instanced in Hippolytus’s *Apostolic Tradition* and Tertullian’s *De baptismo*, it seems that the period of instruction could be extended up to three years. By the mid-third century the process of catechesis involved the explanation of basic biblical tropes, and the conveying of the creed and the Lord’s Prayer so that they could be memorized...

The candidates were liberally anointed with oil, entered the waters…, confessing their faith, were immersed under the surface three times (Tertullian, *Against Praseas* 26; Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lectures* 17.14; Basil of Caesarea, *On the Holy Spirit* 15:35; Ambrose, *On the Sacraments* 3.1.1f.; John Chrysostom, *Catechetical Orations* 2.26; idem, *Homily on John* 25.2). They were then clothed (in white garments, hence the term *candidatus* or “dressed in white”) and brought to the bishop, who anointed them with sacred *chrism* to signify the “seal of the Holy Spirit,’ laid hands on them, and in primitive times also led them to a symbolic meal of milk and honey…

In the fourth century there was a flowering of ritual and theological reflection around the practice of baptism. Several of the leading churchmen of the day, such as Cyril of Jerusalem (*Catechetical Orations*) and Gregory of Nazianzus (*Oration 38-40*), have left behind accounts of their catechetical preparations for the awe-inspiring rites of initiation.”[[37]](#footnote-37)

“The African church was much vexed by the question of whether baptism by heretics could be accepted as valid. Cyprian of Carthage and the Eastern churches were generally inclined to see it as invalid and so baptized *de novo*.”[[38]](#footnote-38)

“Schism within and heresy without forced the church to raise the question of the validity of the baptismal rite. In the second century, Tertullian denied the validity of baptism administered by heretics. Normally it was done by the bishop; however, on special occasions deacons and presbyters might be permitted to administer the rite.. women were forbidden to perform it…

The practice of infant baptism completes the early patristic developments; infant baptism was practiced in the second century, but only with the aid of an adult sponsor. A full defense of this custom came to expression in the theology of Augustine in the late fourth and early fifth centuries…”[[39]](#footnote-39)

“The connection of baptism with a confession of faith continued in the postapostolic period as many be seen in the baptismal liturgies…

An important exception to the normal necessity of receiving baptism was made in the case of martyrs. Martyrdom was viewed as bringing a forgiveness of sins.”[[40]](#footnote-40)

The abovementioned glimpse on the sacrament of baptism during the early Christian era proves how much the fathers of the early church cared about this great sacrament understanding its implications, necessity and effect.

Not going into the details of the rituals and the controversies, we would just like to note that they illustrate how baptism was highly estimated as essential and necessary for the salvation of the soul.

It is our prayer to return back to the spirit of the early Christian era and not to abandon the slightest details of what was handed down precisely, wisely and knowingly by the apostles and the holy early church fathers.

**To Conclude:**

Unless one is baptized with water and spirit in the name of the Father, son and Holy Spirit within the church, one cannot see or enter the kingdom of heaven since ones sin is not remitted, for he did not die and resurrect with Christ, therefore he is not regenerated, and cannot become a member in the body of Christ, put on Christ, or receive the seal of the Holy Spirit.

Moreover, all the sacraments cannot be given to a non-baptized, especially the Eucharist, which is essential for salvation, cannot be granted unless a person is baptized in the Church, as the holy fathers asserted.

**Metropolitan Bishoy of Damiette**

**N.B.:**

1- The paper is in two parts: Part I “*Salvation of Non-Believers*” and Part II “*Salvation of the Unbaptized*”.

2- Attached to Part II please find a paper on “*The Importance and Necessity of Infant Baptism in the Sayings of the Early Church Fathers*”.

1. Ante-Nicene Fathers, Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1979, Vol. VII, *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles*, Book V, point XX, p. 449. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. V, *The Treaties of Cyprian*, Third Book, Testimonies, point 24, p. 542. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. V, *The Epistles of Cyprian*, Epistle LXXV to Magnus, point 16, p. 402. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers, series 2, Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1979, Vol. IV, St. Athanasius, *Against the Heathen*, chapter 14, point 2, p. 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Ibid., *Against the Heathen*, chapter 47, point 4, p. 29, 30. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. P.E. Pusey, *The Commentary on the Gospel of St. John by St. Cyril of Alexandria*, Part I, Oriental Orthodox Library, Vol. IV, England 2006, P. 531, 532. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. N&PN Fathers, Vol. VII, Gregory of Nazienzen, *Oration 16, On His Father’s Silence*. Point 9, p.250. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. What is meant here is ‘Satan’; for the Lord Jesus Christ called him “the ruler of this world” (John 14: 30). [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. V, *The Treaties of Cyprian*, Treaties XII, First Book, Heads point 24, p. 508. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Ante-Nicene Fathers, Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1979, Vol. I, Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, chap. XLIV, p. 217. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Ante Nicene Fathers, Vol. V, *The Seventh Council of Carthage Under Cyprian Concerning the Baptism of Heretics*, p. 566. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Ante Nicene Fathers, Vol. V, *The Epistles of Cyprian*, Epistle LXXII to Jubaianus, point 12, p. 382. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. N.&PN. Fathers, series 1, Vol. V, St. Augustine, *On forgiveness of Sins and Baptism*, Chapter 23, p. 24. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. N.&PN. Fathers, series 2, Vol. VII, Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Letters*, Lecture 3, On Baptism, point 10, p. 16. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. N.& PN. Fathers, series2, Vol., VII, St. Gregory Nazienzen, Oration XL, *On Holy Baptism*, point IV p, 360. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 1, Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, Chapter 61, *Christian Baptism*, p. 183. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. H.E. Panteleimon Lampadarios, *The Holy Mysteries of the Eastern Orthodox Church*, Port Said, Egypt, p. 72, quoting St. Athanasius the Great, To Serapion, Epistle 1, 30, in Migne PG 26, 597. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. H.E. Panteleimon Lampadarios, *The Holy Mysteries of the Eastern Orthodox Church*, Port Said, Egypt, p. 75, quoting St. Cyril of Alexandria, *To Romans*, in Migne PG 74, 792. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. N.&PN. Fathers, series 2, Vol. VII, Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Letters*, Lecture 3, On Baptism, point 4, p. 15. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. N.& PN. Fathers, series 1, Vol. XIV, St. John Chrysostom, Homilies on the Gospel According to John, Homily 25, point 2, p. 88, 89. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Ante Nicene Fathers, Vol. V, *The Epistles of Cyprian*, Epistle LXXIII To Pompay, point 6, p. 388. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. N.&PN. Fathers, series 2, Vol. VIII, The Book of St. Basil, *On the Spirit*, chapter 15, point 35, p.22. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. I, Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, Chapter 61, *Christian Baptism*, p. 183. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. V, *The Epistles of Cyprian*, Epistle LXXIII To Pompay, point 7, p. 388. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. V, Epistle 74, Firmilian, Bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia, To Cyprian, Against the Letter of Stephen, A.D. 256, point 8, p. 392. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. A.N. Fathers, Vol. V, *The Epistles of Cyprian*, Epistle I to Donatus, point p.4, p.276. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. N.&PN. Fathers, series 2, Vol. XIV, The Synod Held at Carthage 257 AD, Epistle 70 of Cyprian to Januarius and other Numidian Bishops on *Baptism of Heretics*, p. 518. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Ante Nicene Fathers, Vol. I, *Irenaeus Against Heresies*, chap. XI, point 2, p. 537. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. N.&PN. Fathers, series 1, Vol. V, St. Augustine, On the Soul and Its Origin, chapter 10, p. 319. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. N.& PN. Fathers, series2, Vol. VII, St. Gregory Nazienzen, Oration XL, *On Holy Baptism*, point XXII p, 367. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Ibid., point XXIII, p. 367, 368. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Ante Nicene Fathers, Vol. VII, *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles*, Book VI, point XV, p. 456. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Ibid. *The Ecclesiastical Canons of the Same Holy Apostles*, canon 47, p.503. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. N.&PN. Fathers, series 2, Vol. XIV, The Synod Held at Carthage 257 AD, *Epistle 70 of Cyprian to Januarius and other Numidian Bishops on Baptism of Heretics*, p. 518. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Ante Nicene Fathers, Vol VI, *Works of Dionysius*, Epistle VI to Sixtus, Bishop, point 1, p. 102. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. N&PN Fathers, series 2, Vol. IV, St. Athanasius, Second Discourse Against Arians, Chapter 18, par. 42, 43, p. 371. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. John Anthony McGuckin, *The Westminster Handbook to Patristic Theology*, Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville, London, 2004, p. 41-44. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Ibid. p. 43. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. J.D. Douglas, *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church*, revised edition, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1974, 1978, p. 99-10. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Everett Ferguson, *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, second edition, Garland publishing, Inc. New York & London, 1998, p. 160-163. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)