

Greek-Orthodox Church

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In Salt Lake City, Utah.

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American Civilization 1700
Term Paper
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“Greek-Orthodox Church In Utah”

“The truth orthodox way of thought has always been historical, has always included past, but has never been slaved by it... (for) the strength of the Church is not in the past, present, or future, but in Christ” (Papadakis).

Introduction

Religion history has always had events with adversity as well as diversity by different religion ideas, creating many different paths and anticipation of the “world to come”.

In brief, the long evolution of Orthodox Christianity begins with the first Pentecost in Jerusalem and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Christ’s small circle of disciples. It believes that has maintained a direct continuity of love, faith and mostly an order with the ancient Church of Christ.

Greek-Orthodox Church, claims to be the true Church on earth, because of its possession of an interrupted historical and theological continuity, despite any historical changed through the centuries. Remains substantially coextensive with the Church of the Apostles, proclaiming it is in effect, the living continuation in time and space of the primitive Church in Jerusalem, the one Orthodox Catholic Church in all its fullness and plenitude. The discipline structure of the Church, its social solidarity and internal, its care for the poor as well, have been imperative moral issues to the Church itself.

The Time of Persecution

The Roman Empire, felt threatened by to the religion and political policies; after having the Church many converts from Judaism and the pagan religions. With only a few periods of peace, the Orthodox Church was persecuted for nearly three hundred years. Having thousands of members been martyred.

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Understanding the importance of the Catholic Church since the beginning of the times, we find an important fact with the Orthodox Church close to the eleventh century. Legitimate differences such as political circumstances, cultural clashes and papal claims started the so-called “**The Great Schism**”, for which is the separation between the Western Church (The Roman Catholic) and the Eastern Church (The Orthodox). In despite of the unity and harmony maintained for many centuries, the relations between the East and the West, had always had theological and political differences in which were more intensified by the Crusades and especially with the invasion of the city of Constantinople by the western crusades in the twelfth hundreds. From that period, the Western Church centered about the Pope of Rome and the Eastern Church centered about the Patriarch of Constantinople. Meanwhile, political, cultural and emotional factors have always played and important issue. The Orthodox Church believes that the two principal reasons for the continued “schism” are the papal claims of universal jurisdiction.

After almost 500 years of isolation from each other, by the 1960’s some steps were taken to restore the broken unity. In the past few decades, in the United States, Orthodoxy has been recognized as one of the fourth major faiths with more than 5 million members. The Greek Orthodox Archdiocese, which is the largest in America, operates church schools, an orphanage, a college and a graduate theological school.

In 1968, one of the co-founders of the World Council of Churches was inspired by the one of the late Patriarch Athenagoras whom promoted a sense of unity among the various Orthodox Churches by inaugurating a dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church. The Patriarch declared: “May the Lord of mercy send as soon as possible to our holy Eastern and Western Churches the grace of celebrating the Divine Eucharist anew and of communicating again together”. (Schmemmann)

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We find a series of pamphlets written for the non-Orthodox, especially those who are considering becoming members of the Church who wish to learn and deepen more of their faith and traditions. Fr. Thomas Fitzgerald who is a member of the Hellenic College-Holy Cross School of Theology has written these pamphlets:

- **Introduction-** Introduces the non Orthodox to Orthodox Christianity
- **House of God-** Describes the interior of the Church building
- **Worship-** Discusses the form and characteristics of Orthodox worship.
- **Liturgy-** Describes the meaning and celebration of the Eucharist.
- **Sacraments-** Describes the meaning and importance of the liturgical life.
- **Special Services & Blessings-** Describes the non-sacramental services which contribute to spiritual life.
- **Teachings-** Outlines the salient points of doctrine and basic creedal affirmations.
- **Spirituality-** Discusses the meaning of this as the goal of Christian life.
- **History-** Sketches the great epochs of Orthodoxy.
- **The Church-** Outlines the procedure for becoming a member of the Orthodox Church.

The Orthodox faith believes that it did not begin with mankind's religious speculations or with a human quest for the Divine. The origin is the self-disclosure of God. In their morning prayer they are reminded that "God is the Lord and He has revealed Himself to us", stating that the Church has experienced Him as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The doctrine affirms that there is only one God, in whom there are three distinct persons. The Orthodox Church truly believes that they can participate in the Trinity through the life of the Church, through the celebration of the Eucharist and the Sacraments, as well as the non-sacramental services.

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One of the Orthodox Church statement is that the ministry of Christ on this earth is the bold affirmation that “God became what we are so that we may become what He is”. The incarnation is an expression of Christ, who being a man was more of a profound teacher of morality and that his divinity is united with humanity to fellowship with God.

Greeks in Utah

Greeks starting to immigrate to Utah before 1900. History shows that Nicholas Kastro was the first to arrive in the 1870's, also Leonidas Skliris came to Salt Lake in 1897, Leonidas would later become well known to the Greek community, he opened the boundaries to many of his countrymen. He saw the opportunity of making a lot of money by providing labor needed in the railroad industry as well as mining and so the Greek community became one of the dominant labor force in the region and by 1912 Greek immigrants numbered over 4,000 and by 1915, over 20,000 Greeks were in labor force in the Intermountain West.

Holy Trinity Church

By 1905 thousands of Greeks had arrived in Utah, forming a small section of the City called “Greek Town” in which they became the economic, social and residential center for the New Greek colony. The Greek community then decided to build in that year, the first Greek Church on 439 West 400 South, SLC. Their first Orthodox Church building became the 14th Greek Orthodox Parish Community in the United States. The Greek colony had their first Orthodox priest arrived from Greece giving the name to the building of “**Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church**” for which later on would be designated as a historical building by the state and national register, and by 1968 Archbishop Lakovos elevated the building to a Cathedral. In May of 1992, in the lower level of the Cathedral, the Hellenic Cultural Museum opened to the general public, receiving many state and national awards.

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Meanwhile, as the number of immigrants increased, so did the religious need of the Community that it had developed into smaller “Greek Towns” as if they were small Greek Villages throughout the Wasatch area and by 1920, the Greek Community started to take steps to build a larger Church building and after selling the first Church building, they purchased a new site located in the corner of 3rd South and 2nd West for \$20,000. This new Church building became distinctive for an example of Byzantine architecture.

Keeping in mind the extreme growing of Greek immigrants by the early 1960’s, they saw the necessity of a bigger Church building but were worried of the Community being divided into two separate parishes and at the same time, they decided that their new Church building would be under the direct control of a single Parish Council. Therefore, by December 1969 their second **Greek-Orthodox Prophet Elias Church** was ready to be occupied for which many additions to the building have been made such as; a large Multi purpose center with a cost of \$2.2 million, six basketball courts, additional Sunday school classrooms, a full kitchen facility and a large educational wing for the Saint Sophia Hellenic Orthodox School.

The Orthodox Church is proud to organized every year “**The Greek Festival**” which is an annual activity that has been successfully taken place in the greater Salt Lake area. It is perhaps the most successful “ethnic” festival in Utah with a great exposure to the general public about their culture, religion and heritage. Nowadays, the festival has had as many of 50,000 visitors during the four-day event having the visitors enjoy the “aromas of Greece”.

One of the important activities from the Festival is that the Greek Orthodox Church will set aside funds every year to support many charities for their community.

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The Orthodox Christianity preserves the classical forms of Christian life and belief. Orthodox is derived from two Greek words, “orthos” meaning “correct” and “doxa” meaning “belief or glory”.

In April 15, 2012, Orthodox Christians celebrate Pascha (Easter), Bishop Demetrios shared a message as part of the Hymn of the Canon of Holy Pasha: “Come, on this auspicious day of the Resurrection, let us partake of the new fruit of the vine of divine gladness and of the Kingdom of Christ, praising Him as God unto ages”.

Their Mission Statement is as follows:

“Our faith is committed to cultivating and nurturing faith in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, as taught by the doctrines and traditions of the Holy Orthodox Church. As a Eucharistic community, we are called to be “lights in the world” demonstrating our faith through stewardship, acts of mercy and sacrament participation... Finally, we are required by our Lord in the Great Commission to invite all people regardless of their ethnic, social, economical and educational background to embrace the Orthodox Christianity”.

The Orthodox Faith in Utah is over 100 years, they continue to express in certain words so convincing that, this is the true Church of Christ on earth.



Holy Trinity Cathedral



Prophet Elias Church

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