
St. Mark of Ephesos

A Book Review

by

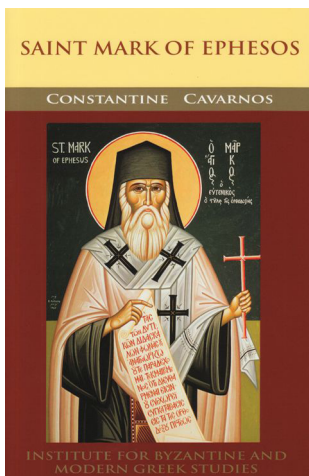
His Grace, Bishop Clement of Gardikion
Secretary of the Holy Synod

Translated by Hieromonk Patapios

Constantine Cavarinos, *St. Mark of Ephesos*. With an Introduction by Archbishop Chrysostomos of Etna. (Belmont, MA: Institute for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, 2008)

TOWARDS the end of this past year, 2008, there appeared yet another interesting book in the English language by the celebrated and widely-published traditionalist Greek-American professor, Constantine Cavarinos, under the title, *St. Mark of Epheso[us]*.

This highly-respected professor has been actively authoring books for half of a century or more, and this contribution to the honor and to a wider presentation of this treasury of the Orthodox Faith, Tradition, and life, both in Greece and elsewhere, is immense.



This new and handsome book, eighty-two pages in length, which is a publication of the Institute for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies in Belmont, Massachusetts, of which the author is a founder, is aimed at presenting a clear, yet wholly comprehensive, summary of the person of this great theologian and Father of the Church, St. Mark Evgenikos, Metropolitan of Ephesos. As his basic source, Cavarinos uses the well-known work of that Titan

of Pedagogy and, indeed, Glory of the Church, St. Athanasios Parios († 1813), *The Anti-Pope*, which was first published in Leipzig in 1785 and not republished until 1981, in Thessaloniki, by "Orthodoxos Kypsele" Publications. St. Athanasios Parios in fact calls St. Mark the Anti-Pope *par excellence* and a "Wonder of the Ages."

Dr. Cavarnos' work on St. Mark appeared initially in 1972, in the periodical "Orthodoxos Typos." In the present edition, the original Greek prototype of that article appears alongside a beautiful English translation, which was carefully crafted by Hieromonk Patapios, a brother of the St. Gregory Palamas Monastery in Etna, California. U.S.A.

Cited in the book are the basic biographical facts about the Saint: his background, his studies, his monastic commitment, his ecclesiastical appointments and distinctions, and his participation in the Synod of Ferrara-Florence (1438-1439), where St. Mark struggled in defense of the Patristic mind-set, having razed the haughtiness of darkness, that is, the delusion and heresy of the Latins.

This unionist synod is rightly characterized as a false synod, since its aim was, in essence, to humiliate the Orthodox by subjugating them to the heretical demands of the Pope, so that Constantinople, in its death throes from the wounds inflicted by the Ottomans, might obtain aid from the Western powers.

St. Mark was not an avowed or fanatical enemy of the West. He envisioned and proposed a genuine dialogue in consonance with whatever was believed in the undivided Church prior to the schism of the eleventh century, the criterion being the common Synodal and Patristic Tradition of that period, and not some unacceptable form of Papal Primacy over the entire Church.

For this reason, the Saint spearheaded the endeavor to present a meticulous exposition of the Orthodox teaching on such contentious issues as the Procession of the Holy Spirit and what the Westerners called the Purgatorial Fire. He was, however, not given the opportunity to broach the other divisive issues, since the Papists evaded them.

When pressure from all sides finally compelled the Orthodox to submit to a hasty, Uniate-style union, St. Mark steadfastly opposed this, refusing to countenance any compromise whatsoever when the purity of the Faith was at stake.

The Saint's failure to sign the "Decree" (*Horos*) of the false synod, as is well known, forced the overweening Pope Eugenius to utter the historic remark: "Then we have achieved nothing!"

The Saint ignored threats of every kind and, when he returned to the East, he thenceforth led the anti-unionist struggle, exclaiming, "Let us stand aright!"

Professor Cavarnos is quite correct in concluding: "Truly great among the Fathers is Saint Mark Evgenikos, and a most important addition to the choir of the Confessors, a glory and boast of the one and only true Church, the Orthodox" (p. 38).

St. Gennadios Scholarios, the Saint's disciple and the first Patriarch after the Fall of Constantinople, rightly numbered his teacher among the choir of the Saints through a Synodal Act, in 1456, and decreed that his memory be celebrated on January 19.

In Cavarnos' book, following the *Apolytikion*, *Kontakion*, and *Megalynarion* of the Saint in Greek and English, as well as an Icon of the Saint, there is inserted an extensive Introduction by His Eminence, Archbishop Chrysostomos of Etna, Exarch of the Holy Synod in America.

His Eminence, with the percipience and academic formality that characterize him, refers epigrammatically to the contents of the book and observes, and certainly rightly so, that Dr. Cavarnos' portrayal of the rejection of the False Synod of Ferrara-Florence by St. Mark, in his confrontation of the challenges posed by the unionists and anti-unionists of his day, which bear many similarities to the present-day divisions between the Orthodox ecumenists and anti-ecumenists, commends the present publication as particularly timely and instructive.

St. Mark of Ephesos, His Eminence accurately states, rejected the union because it was not based on the correct methodological preconditions which the Saint had from the beginning established for his participation in the Synod; i.e., the historical

norms of the undivided Church and the authority of the Holy Fathers. In order to understand the opposition of the Saint, that opposition must be studied within its proper historical and spiritual dimensions. Thus, after the Fourth Crusade and the destruction of Constantinople by the Papists, the idea of union in the East did not enjoy popularity. In addition, the Saint, though without prejudice, was a genuine bearer of the Hesychastic Tradition of Orthodoxy, which found itself diametrically opposed to the Scholastic and institutional foundations of the Christian order of the West and, indeed, of Papal primacy.

Thus, the rejection of the False union was in fact a heroic act of faith in fidelity to the principles of Hesychasm. The stand of St. Mark shows that there is no middle-point between Truth and falsehood, constituting an example of one following the Royal Path of faithfulness to the Truth in love. Such a stand maintains a wondrous balance between commitment to the faith and pastoral discretion, as well as a willingness to unite with separated brothers, not by way of a hypocritical or expedient union, but through a sincere discussion of union in the Truth.

St. Mark of Ephesos, the Archbishop of Etna concludes, is for us anti-ecumenists, today, a beacon in our struggle for the maintenance of the Faith and the transmission of its treasure to others, enlightening us with the graciousness of his spirit in the preservation of the unadulterated Truth of Christianity from all falsehood.

Dr. Cavarinos' book also contains a short chapter regarding the works of St. Mark, which are not just anti-Latin, but theological, ethico-philosophical, hymnographic, and epistolographic, and so forth.

Incidentally, a clear picture of the Saint's enormous, though mostly unpublished, literary output is presented in the outstanding book by Hieromonk Irinej Bulovic, *The Mystery of the Distinction in the Holy Trinity Between the Divine Essence and Energy According to St. Mark Evgenikos of Ephesus* [in Greek], Vol. xxxix in the series *Analekta Blatadon*, published by the Patriarchal Institute for Patristic Studies (Thessaloniki: 1983), concerning which there is, surprisingly, no mention in Dr. Cavarinos' book.

Additionally, in another concise chapter, St. Mark is presented as a philosopher and, subsequently, in yet another as an hymnographer. Permit me to note, as an aside, that in the exhaustive study by Eveline Mineva, *The Hymnographic Oeuvre of Mark Evgenikos* [in Greek] (Athens: Ekdoseis Kanake, 2004), all of the Saint's extant hymnographic works are published for the first time in a critical edition.

There follows a bibliography of St. Mark by the author, Dr. Cavarnos, and in an appendix there is a book review by the author's brother, Professor John Cavarnos, of the well-known work by Nikolaos Basileiades, *St. Mark Evgenikos and the Union of the Churches* [in Greek] (Athens: Ekdoseis "Ho Soter," 1983).

Finally, there are indices of names and subjects.

It is evident that this small work is truly very important and needed, since the figure of St. Mark Evgenikos is especially timely in our days of syncretistic ecumenist apostasy. The Saint's ever-relevant message invites us to take up his spirit and his creative vision. Confession of the Faith is not independent from the totality of the Evangelical way of life, for it is directly related to the loftiest calling and vocation of every man: that is, communion with God. When this vocation truly exists, it simultaneously brings forth a real and natural communion of love in truth between human beings, that is, in the Church, as the milieu and locus of revelation, purification, glory, and salvation.

Thus, adherence to, and the defense of, Orthodoxy, understood in this way, is the most hopeful and beneficial activity in the world. May St. Mark help us and inspire us to this end!



Publication information and orders:

Institute for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies
115 Gilbert Road
Belmont, MA 02478-2200
U.S.A.