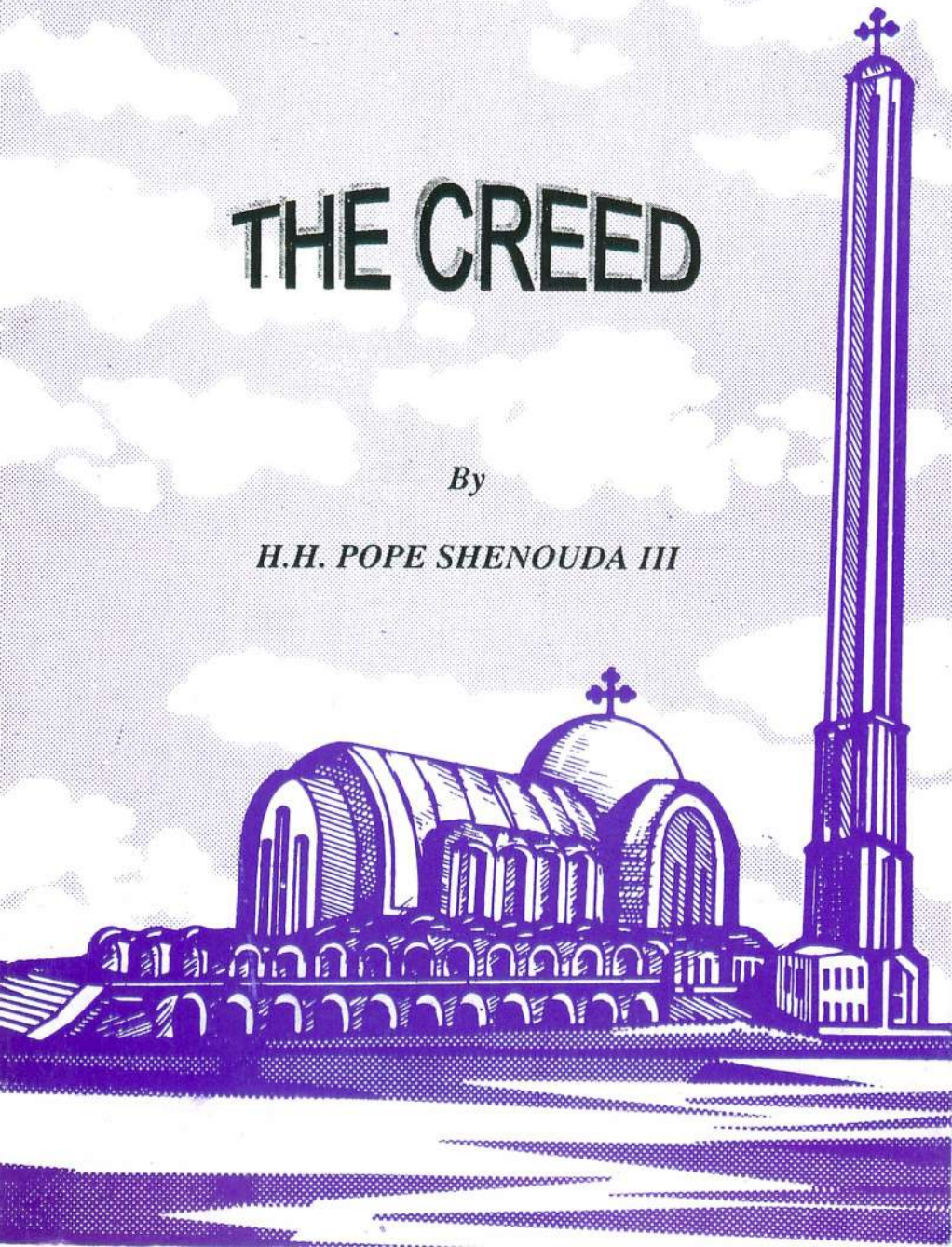


THE CREED

By

H.H. POPE SHENOUDA III





**COPTIC ORTHODOX
PATRIARCHATE**



See of St. Mark

THE CREED

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H.H. POPE SHENOUDA III

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*H. H. Pope Shenouda III, 117th Pope of Alexandria and
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INTRODUCTION

The Creed is the essence of our Christian Faith. All the Christian Churches all over the world have the same belief, and who do not hold to it are not deemed Christians, such as Jehova Witnesses and the Sabbatherians.

The Church gives so great value to the creed that it made the Creed part of the Hours Prayers throughout day and night as faith is an essential element for our spiritual life, not only for our beliefs.

Hence, we found it appropriate to print this book so that it might give a brief concentrated explanation of the Creed. This book will be taught in the Seminary with all its branches in Egypt and abroad, and in the Sunday Schools and Youth Meetings.

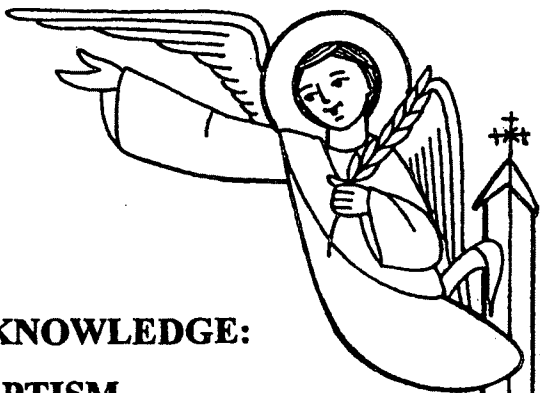
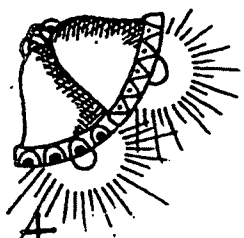
The Creed comprises various dogmas such as:

Trinitarianism, the Godhead of the Son, the Godhead of the Holy Spirit, the Incarnation and Redemption, Baptism, the Resurrection, the Life to come.

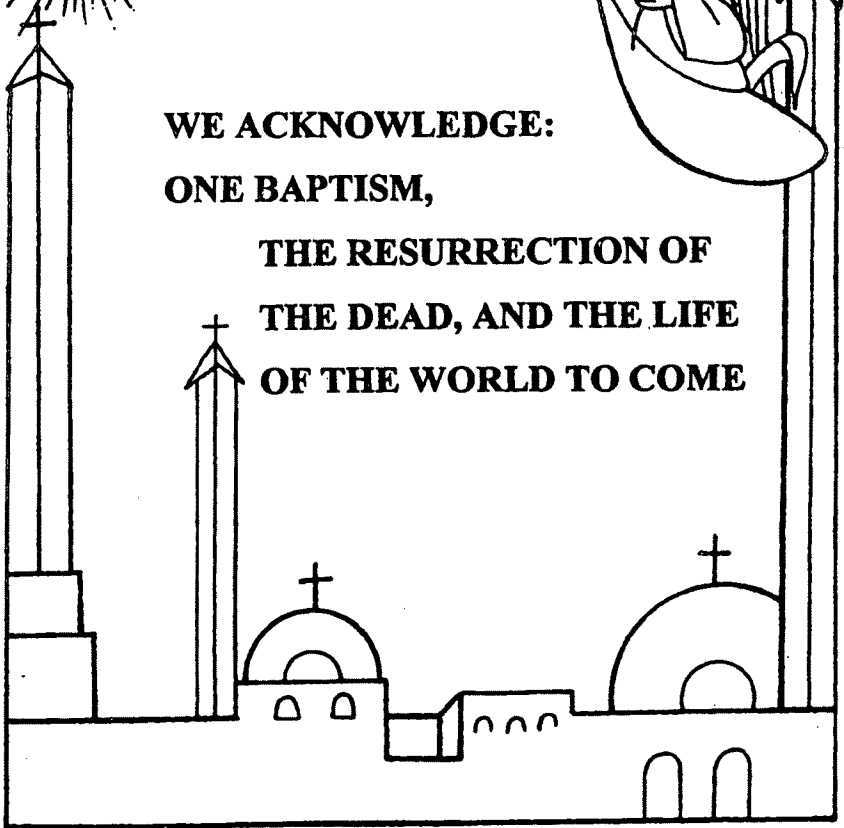
Anyone who studies this book will have comprehended a huge number of faith rules, which were in olden times taught to the catechumen before being baptized.

Pope Shenouda III





**WE ACKNOWLEDGE:
ONE BAPTISM,
THE RESURRECTION OF
THE DEAD, AND THE LIFE
OF THE WORLD TO COME**



A foreword

The main facts of faith as stated in the Creed have existed since the olden times. The Christians lived these facts of faith in the first three generations. Some of these facts were included in the laws of the apostles, the laws of Apollides, and in some sayings of the fathers. The important thing about the Creed is that all the Churches of the Christian world did believe in one faith adopted by them all. Therefore, it was necessary that said Creed be Validated by an ecumenical council formed of representatives of all the churches in the world.

One Creed has been formulated by Ecumenical Council of Nicaea in the year 325 A.D.

The Council of Nicaea is the first ecumenical council which refuted the Arian Heresy that denied the Godhead of Christ. The Coptic church was represented in this council by Pope Alexander, the nineteenth patriarch of Alexandria, accompanied by his deacon Athanasius who formulated all the items of the Creed. The part on the Godhead of the Holy Spirit has been added in the Ecumenical Council of Constantinople held in 381 A.D. to refute Macdonius' heresy which denied the Godhead of the Holy Spirit.

All the churches of the world -even though they disagree concerning some beliefs- do believe in all the items of the Creed. Furthermore, any denomination that does not believe in the Creed as a whole cannot be considered Christian, such as Jehova Witnesses and the Sabbatherians who believe in the Two Testaments of the Holy Bible (according to their own

translation) but do not believe in all the Christian beliefs included in the Creed.

The Creed includes the following main facts of the faith:

1. The Unity of God. The Creed starts with the words "Truly we believe in One God".
2. The Holy Trinity, the Godhead, and the role of each.
3. The Incarnation, Redemption, and Salvation.
4. Baptism for the Remission of Sins.
5. The Resurrection of the Dead and the Life to Come in Eternity
6. The Second Coming of Christ for judgment.
7. The One Holy, Catholic, Apostolic Church.

Each of the items of the Creed will be expounded on the following pages one by one:

Truly we believe:

Faith includes belief, trust, conviction and complete acceptance with the mind and heart. St. Paul the Apostle defined faith as the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen (*Heb. 11:1*). We believe in miracles for example though they are against reasonableness and above the level of the intellect. The mind can find no explanation for

a miracle except that God works it, thus one accepts it without understanding it.

In our daily life, take for example the new scientific inventions. Many of these inventions are accepted only by some people, while the majority cannot understand or comprehend them. One cannot, for instance, understand what electricity or telecommunication is, but one accepts it without thinking. Not everyone knows how computer works but he accepts it.

Faith does not contradict with the intellect, but is above its level.

All of us believe that the spirit is the cause of man's life, without seeing it. The mind accepts the fact that when the spirit departs from someone, he dies. But the mind does not know what the spirit is, nor all the details about it such as its form, its ability to know things, or its destiny. However, we accept what faith tells us about it.

Likewise, the resurrection of the bodies is a matter accepted in faith without the mind knowing how it is perfected, or how the bodies come to life after being turned to dust. We cannot know this, and it is not important to understand, but rather to accept this in faith.

The mind accepts what faith presents to us.

Faith brings us to a higher level than the intellect, then the mind deals with the matter and explains it.

These matters which are beyond the intellect are received in faith from the inspiration, or from the Holy Scriptures as God spoke them to the prophets.

Truly we believe ... It is not mere faith we inherited from our fathers or mothers who were believers, but we truly believe, with conviction in our hearts, with all truth.

Faith requires a humble heart, acceptance, and simplicity.

Some people have their minds developed, and they lose the simplicity of faith !

A child believes because he has not yet attained the degree of doubt that makes one inquire about everything and argues everything. If you teach a child to pray, he will pray with you and will speak to God in his prayer without asking you who that God is to whom he speaks and does not see. That is why I am amazed of the Protestants who refuse to baptize children because they are not yet believers ! Would that they have the faith of the children!

It is strange indeed that the mind develops against faith, and the more it develops it doubts and argues. It is good therefore to implant the basics of faith in the mind of the child very early, for the faith of the child is more powerful than his intellect, or in other words more developed.

A mind which is whole intellect without faith is poor indeed.

Once, an atheist philosopher was passing by a farm and saw a farmer kneeling down and raising his hands towards heaven praying very zealously. The philosopher was astonished

and said to himself: I am ready to give up my philosophy to anyone who can give me such faith as that of the simple farmer who was speaking to an invisible being with all zeal, from all his heart !!

Truly we believe ... in what?

We believe in One God:

We believe in the Holy Trinity but as being One God. We say "In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit ... One God, Amen."

Believing in One God is the first of the Ten Commandments. The Lord says, "*I am the Lord your God ... You shall have no other gods before Me*" (Ex. 20: 2, 3) (Deut. 5: 6, 7). Many other verses on the unity of God are found in the Book of Isaiah the Prophet such as, "*I am He. Before Me there was no God formed, nor shall there be after Me*" (Isa. 43: 10, 11). [See also (Isa. 44: 6, 9) (Isa. 46: 9) (Isa. 48: 12)].

The New Testament speaks also about the unity of God.

St. John the apostle says, "*For there are three who bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one*" (1 Jn. 5: 7).

And St. James the apostle says, "*You believe that there is one God, You do well. Even the demons believe - and tremble!*" (Jas. 2: 19). The apostle means by this the intellectual faith not the inner actual faith. One who does not believe in One God is lower in faith than the devils!

And the Lord Jesus Christ said “*baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*” (Mt. 28: 19). He said in *the name*, not *in the names*.

We do not believe in the plurality of God, but in One God.

One may say how the three can be one! According to mathematic rules $1 + 1 + 1 = 3$ not 1, but we say that according to the same rules $1 \times 1 \times 1 = 1$ not 3. The Son says, “*The Father is in Me, and I in Him*” (Jn. 10: 38) and, “*I and My Father are one*” (Jn. 10: 30). We are not polytheists, we believe in no other gods.

The Holy Trinity does not mean plurality of Gods, but means peculiarities of the One Godhead.

God is Being, Intellect and Spirit. With the intellect and the Spirit God is One Being. The man created in God’s image is a being with intellect and spirit, and the three are one. Likewise, the fire with the heat and light coming out of it are one. The sun is also one with its heat and light.

The father is the Godhead, the Son is the utterance of God’s intellect or the wise word of God, God’s wisdom (*1 Cor. 23, 24*). The Holy Spirit is God’s Spirit. God and His Spirit are one, and God and His intellect are one, and the three are One.

Those who believe in the plurality of gods are against reason in understanding the Godhead.

If there are many gods, one of them will be more powerful; this one will be god and the other two will not be gods. If the three have the same power, each of them will be bound by the power of the other two, in other words each of them will have

power over all other beings except the other two gods having the same power. In this way none of them will be God since none of them is omnipotent.

The same can be said with regard to creation: If there were many gods, who will be the creator? If one of them is, he will be god and all creation will be ruled by him since he is the creator, while the others will not be gods. If this creator has created all beings, had he created the other gods? And if so, they will not be gods. If not, his power to create will be bound by the other gods, and if bound and limited, he will not be god.

If we apply the same reasoning to the other divine attributes, we will have an inevitable reasonable result which is to believe in One God.

We believe in One God ... God the Father:

God the Father:

The Creed speaks about each Person (hypostasis) of the Holy Trinity separately, starting with the Father.

God the Father is the Father in the Holy Trinity, and the Father of all who believe in Him.

He is the Godhead not seen by anyone as st. John said, "*No one has seen God at anytime. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him*" (Jn. 1: 18). We cannot see the Father, but we can see Him in His incarnate Son who came in the likeness of men (*Phil. 2: 7, 8*).

It was the Son who appeared in the Old Testament because no one has seen the Father.

Some may think wrong that God made us His children in the New Testament only, while in the Old Testament He was only a Lord not a Father. But this is wrong.

In the Old Testament God declared Himself as Father also, as He says in the Book of Isaiah the prophet, "*I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me*" (Isa. 1: 2). And those who believed in Him addressed Him as Father, "*O Lord, You are our Father; we are the clay, and You our potter ...*" (Isa. 64: 8).

Before the story of the Flood, it is written, "*the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were beautiful*" (Gen. 6: 2). The sons of Seth were called the sons of God to distinguish them from the offspring of Cain whose daughters were called the daughters of men. And in the Proverbs, God says, "*My son, give Me your heart*" (Prov. 23: 26).

In the Old Testament God was Lord and Father, and in the New Testament was also so. His relationship with mankind never changes.

However, God's Fatherhood to us differs from His Fatherhood to the Son within the Holy Trinity as we shall explain when speaking about the only-begotten Son.

Since God is our Father who treats us as His children, we also should treat Him as Father, with all love, respect and obedience.

He is Father, and He made us children when He gave us birth in the Water and the Spirit "*through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit*" (Tit. 3: 5).

He is God the Father, the Almighty.

The Almighty:

He governs all the creation, nothing is out of His control and dispensation. All the creation includes the heavenly and the earthly creation whether the rational or the irrational; all are under His control. The creation includes also the angels and the devils.

God, out of His extreme mercy and compassion, granted us a free will.

By this free will we can obey or disobey His commandments. All our works are under His control, written before Him in a book of remembrance (*Mal. 3: 16*). He will charge us for them when He comes to reward each according to his works (*Mt. 16: 27*). He may judge us while on the earth, as the scriptures mention many examples of punishment inflicted by God such as the punishment by the Great Flood, (*Gen. 6*), the punishment of Sodom and Gomorrah (*Gen. 19*), the punishment of Korah, Dathan and Abiram (*Num. 16*), the punishment of Pharaoh with many plagues, then by drowning in the Red Sea (*Ex. 16*), and furthermore the punishment inflicted by God upon His beloved who sin such as the punishment of David (*2 Sam. 12*).

The Devil is not the god of evil, for he is only one of God's creation under the control of God the Almighty.

If God wills to stop the devil's activity or put limits for him, God can do that. In the story of Job the Righteous, the devil takes permission to tempt Job and within certain limits. In the first temptation God gave power to the devil over Job's property and household, and the devil could not go beyond that level (*Job 1*). In the second temptation God permitted the devil to touch Job's body but to spare his life (*Job 2: 6*), and the devil obeyed.

And in the story of the Legion, the devils begged the Lord to send them to the swine that they may enter them and the Lord permitted them (*Mk. 5: 12, 13*). This shows that the devil had no power even to enter the swine without God's permission.

In the Revelation God sent His angel and bound Satan for a thousand years, after which Satan will be released from his prison (*Rev. 20: 2, 7*).

The Lord gave His disciples power over the unclean spirits to cast them out (*Mt. 10: 1*). And the seventy disciples were joyful and said, "*Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name*" (*Lk. 10: 17*). We also are given by the Lord the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy (*Lk. 10: 19*) (By the enemy here is meant Satan).

Hence we should not fear Satan since he is under the control of God the Almighty.

Someone may ask, 'If God is the Almighty, why do all these troubles and damages happen in the universe?' Jeremiah the Prophet asked a similar question; he said, "*Righteous are You, O Lord, when I plead with You; yet let me talk with You about Your judgments. Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why are those happy who deal so treacherously?*" (Jer. 12: 1).

And Gideon asked the angel of the Lord, "*O my Lord, if the Lord is with us, why then has all this happened to us*" (Jud. 6: 13).

We think that the Lord probably has some purpose from that: to give some a blessing out of the temptation, or the gift of forbearance, but certainly when He permits some temptation to befall us, He is with us in that temptation as in the case of Joseph the Righteous:

Here we say that there is a difference between God's intent and God's permission.

God's intent is ultimately good, however, He gives rational creatures power to act within limits. They may behave in a wrong way and cause harm, but all this happens by God's permission, and all the time God, being the Almighty, observes, charges, punishes, corrects and sometimes shows long-suffering.

God may also interfere and stop the work of the wicked.

Therefore, the free will given to the wicked is not open, but rather under the control of the Almighty, to whom David and his companions once cried out, saying, "*O Lord, I pray, turn the counsel of Ahitophel into foolishness*" (2 Sam. 15: 31).

And God interfered many times to save His saints from the counsel of the wicked. Therefore David sang admitting this, "*If it had not been the Lord who was on our side when men rose against us, then they would have swallowed us alive ... Our soul has escaped as a bird from the snare of the fowlers. The snare is broken, and we have escaped. Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth*" (Ps. 124: 2).

God interfered and saved David from the plots of King Saul, and saved Mordecai from the conspiracy of Haman (*Esth. 7: 10*).

God saved the whole church from the Roman Empire, and many examples of God's interference to stop the plots of the wicked can be found in the Holy Bible and the history.

God permits oppression but spares not the oppressor.

The Lord judges fro the oppressed. He permitted King Saul to do unjustly to David, but Saul did not escape God's punishment, for he and his sons were killed on Mount Gilboa. They even cut off Saul's head and stripped off his armor and fastened his body to the wall of Beth Shan (*1 Sam. 31: 8-10*).

Absalom also did unjustly to his father David, and he did not escape God's punishment. In the battle, his head was caught in the thick boughs of a great terebinth tree, and Joab thrust three spears through his heart while he was still alive. Then the young men who bore Joab's armor surrounded Absalom and struck and killed him (*2 Sam. 18: 9-15*).

God permitted Cain to attack his brother Abel and kill him. But Cain did not escape punishment . He was cursed by

God and went as a fugitive and a vagabond on the earth
(*Gen. 4: 8-14*).

If we also read about the church persecutors, we will be amazed .. No one escapes God's control and knowledge ... No one escapes the Almighty's power, judgment and punishment ..

God controls everything, not only the acts, but also the thoughts and intents.

God controls even the embryo in his mother's womb. He controls the invisible as well as the visible, the things that can be seen and that cannot ... Therefore, do not be sad for whatever afflictions you undergo. God will certainly interfere and judge justly on the earth, He will judge for the oppressed. He punished Ahab and Jezebel for killing Naboth the Jezreelite (1 Kgs. 21).

However, God prevented many afflictions, and many tribulations, temptations and damages. He stopped them before coming to us without our knowledge.

Regretfully we thank God only for the visible troubles from which He saves us, but do not thank Him for preventing the invisible troubles before reaching us, which troubles might be more numerous. They are stopped by God the Almighty.

The temptations and troubles which God permits to befall us may fulfill the words of the Holy Bible, "*all things work together for good to those who love God*" (Rom. 8: 28), or "*My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials*" (Jas. 1: 2).

If you know that God is the Almighty, you will know that He does not only control what happens to you, but also what happens from you.

He reads thoughts, examines your heart, and knows your intents and your feelings. Nothing is hidden to him. He said to one of the angels of the seven churches "*I know your works*" (Rev. 2, 3).

If you know all this, you will feel ashamed for every sinful act you do or every thought within you which God knows. You will feel ashamed from God the Almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth.

The Creator of heaven and earth:

The word "Creator" is an attribute of God alone. He creates from the non existent.

The farthest extent a human mind can reach is to be a maker not a creator.

Indeed, man with the utmost intelligence and knowledge, who built space ships and reached the moon, who excelled to a great extent in technology, he is nevertheless just a maker not a creator. Whatever he invents, is made from the material created by God.

Man made everything with the mind which God created in him.

So when we prove that the Lord Christ has created all things, we are in fact proving His divinity, because no one but God is creator.

But who created this universe (Gen. 1, 2)? Is it the Father or the Son?

The Father created everything through the Son.

Since the Son is God's uttering mind or rational utterance, and since He is God's wisdom and God's power (1 Cor. 1: 23, 24), then we can say that God created everything through His mind, His utterance, His Word, His wisdom, or in other words through the Son. This is what St. Paul the Apostle says about the Son, "*through whom also He made the worlds*" (Heb. 1: 2), "*All things were created through Him and for Him*" (Col. 1: 16). And St. John, in beginning of the gospel wrote by him, said, "*All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made*" (Jn. 1: 3). Is He not God's uttering mind, and God and His mind are one!

If you had some problem and you solved it, would it be you, or your mind, who solved it? You solved it, your brain solved it, and you solved it with your brain.

Since God has created everything, then everything is in His power, and of course who creates from nothing can raise from the dead.

• God created Heaven and earth in the beginning (Gen. 1: 1).

Heaven and earth:

Heaven, linguistically, is whatever is elevated and high, the highest point our sight can reach. Here we wonder if there is one heaven or many heavens.

The first verse of the Holy Bible says, "*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth*" (Gen. 1: 1). This shows that there are various heavens, as we pray also in the Lord's Prayer (in the Arabic version), "*Our Father who is in the heavens*" (Mt. 6: 9).

St. Paul the Apostle tells us that he was caught up to the third heaven (2 Cor. 12: 2), and he mentions that this third heaven is Paradise (2 Cor. 12: 4). If Paradise is the third heaven, what would be the first and the second heavens?

The first heaven is the atmosphere surrounding the earth, which we call the heaven of the birds, where the birds fly "*They fly away like an eagle toward heaven*" (Prov. 23: 5). The aeroplanes also plough through the sky.

The second heaven is the solar system where the sun, the moon, the stars, the galaxies, and all planets exist. No plane can approach the sun, or it will be burnt. It is true that space ships could reach the moon, but many parts in the solar system cannot be approached by man. The talk about the stars, the meteors and the galaxies is amazing and strange although a very little is yet known in this field.

Above these three heavens is the "*heaven of heavens*"

In the heaven of heavens is God's throne, and of this heaven the Lord warned us, "*do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God's throne ..*" (Mt. 5: 34). And Nicodemus said about this heaven, "*No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven*" (Jn. 3: 13).

Elijah ascended to heaven, but not to this "*heaven of heavens*" which belongs to God alone.

King Solomon mentioned this "*heaven of heavens*" in his prayer on the day of consecrating the Temple. He said, "*Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain You. How much less this temple which I have built!*" (1 Kgs. 8: 27). We also mention the heaven of heavens in the hymn when we sing with David the Prophet the psalm, "*Praise the Lord from the heavens. Praise Him in the highest ... Praise Him, you heaven of heavens*" (Ps. 148: 1, 4).

However, all these heavens are called "heaven" because of their elevation and loftiness.

It is said in the Ten Commandments about the rest on the seventh day, "*For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day*" (Ex. 20: 11). The word "made" is chosen because He created the substance first, and of this substance He made the heavens which we see and the earth on which we dwell.

The words "God created the heavens and the earth" mean that He created also all those who dwelt them.

He created heaven and all the angels and heavenly hosts with all their ranks, whether angels, archangels, dominions,

principalities, or powers (Col. 1: 16) as well as the Seraphim and the innumerable multitude of the heavenly hosts.

He created also the earth with all that is on it.

He created all things, visible and invisible (Col. 1: 16) .

We can understand what is meant by the word “visible”, but what does the word “invisible” mean?

The invisible :

By this is meant that which we cannot see by our human senses which see only substances, and what is not substance cannot be seen.

1. The spirits for example are among the invisible things.

The spirits include the angels (Ps. 104: 4), and many of them surround us but we do not see them. When the angel takes a form we see him, but as a spirit we cannot see him. The same applies to the devils because they also are spirits, either evil or unclean spirits (Mt. 10: 1, 8). This fight us, but we do not see them. Only when the devil takes a certain form he becomes visible in that form, but not in his original nature as spirit.

In you also as a human being, there is something visible which is the body, and something invisible which is the spirit, and we cannot see it when it comes out of the body at the time of death. When the spirit of some saint appears to us (in a

miracle for example), the saint shall have taken a form which our senses can grasp.

2. There are also certain very minute or very far things which we cannot see by our sight, but by certain apparatus.

An example of such things are microbes which cannot be seen with the naked eye but with microscopes or other apparatus. Thank God that we cannot see them, otherwise we could not be able to live, especially in polluted environment and air. We are lucky we do not see them.

Some other things are invisible because of being too far. They can only be seen by telescopes. The celestial bodies are an example, but space ships could see things that were invisible in the past. However, what is seen by satellites and space shuttles is very very little of the orbit which details are classified under the invisible things.

3. Some other things are invisible at present because they are hidden, but some of these can be seen through exploration.

Take for example the underground metals, some of which could be seen by various exploration means and by digging. Thus we are able to take out of the ground and the rocks gold, copper, manganese, diamond, and alike metals that were invisible before being discovered.

In addition, petroleum and natural gas could be discovered, as well as all the wealth in the deep waters that became available to man and became visible now.

Moreover, under this category of invisible things, there are things within man's body which were invisible and became visible by rays, scans, MRI and other medical apparatus.

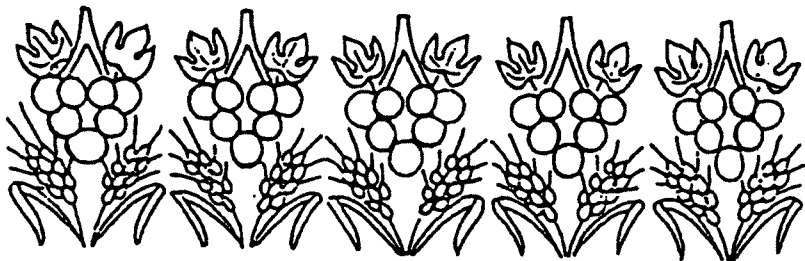
4. Some characteristics are provided by God in the human nature, and though invisible their action is evident.

An example of this is the mind, which cannot be seen but its action is apparent and reveals it. The conscience also is invisible but its work is clear.

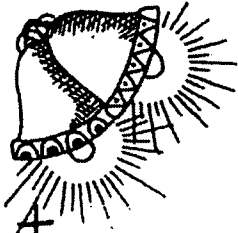
5. There are also the gifts endowed man by God.

The gift cannot be seen, but its action is visible. Besides, God may give some people wisdom or faith (1 Cor. 12), which we cannot see, but we can see their work which reveals their existence.

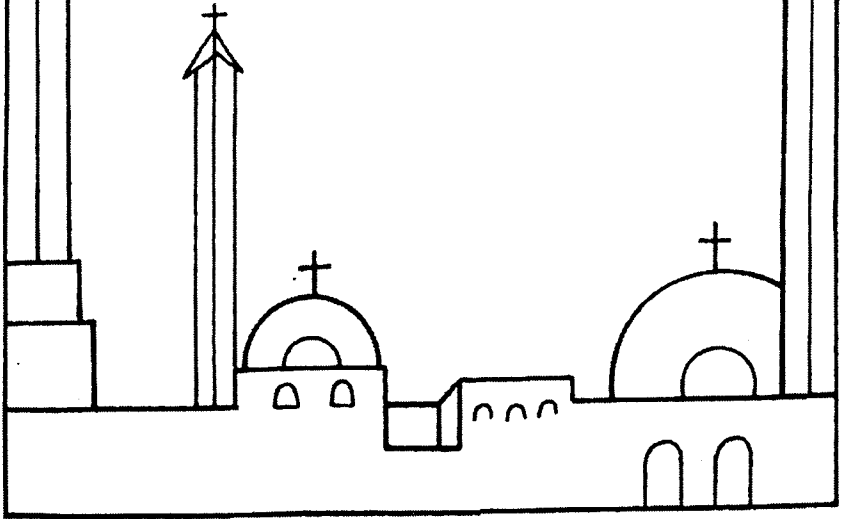
Here we come to the end of the part of the Creed on the Father.







**WE BELIEVE IN
ONE LORD, JESUS CHRIST**



We believe in One Lord, Jesus Christ

We believe in One Lord:

The word "Lord" means also "master" and "God", and when we say "O Lord" in our prayer, we mean "O God".

In the Creed, the word "Lord" is used to mean "God".

And the Lord Christ is called "Lord" in the Holy Bible to refer to His divinity.

For instance when speaking about the terrifying Day of Judgment He says, "*Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'"* (Mt. 7: 22, 23).

The same word "Lord" is used in the context of talking about the Last Judgment as in (Mt. 25: 37, 44), when He was addressed by this name while sitting on the throne of His glory to judge (Mt. 25: 31). And st. Stephen addressed Him with the same title at the time of his martyrdom, "*Lord Jesus, receive my spirit*" (Acts 7: 59).

The title "Lord" is also used in the context of the talk about His divinity; for the apostle said, "*... and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and through whom we live*" (1 Cor. 8: 6).

He is called also "*Lord of the Sabbath*" (Mt. 12: 8), "*the Lord of glory*" (1 Cor. 2: 8). The title "Lord" is used also for the Lord Christ in the context of the miracles.

[See our book: *The Divinity of Christ*. pp. 51-59].

One of the most beautiful remarks in this respect is that our Lord Jesus Christ is not only entitled "Lord" but also the Lord of lords (Rev. 19: 16).

This title is repeated in (Rev. 17: 4) "*Lord of lords and King of Kings*", a title confined to God alone as stated in the Book of Deuteronomy, "*For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome*" (Deut. 10: 17).

But lest anyone think that the use of the word "Lord" instead of the word "God" means that the Lord Christ is lesser in rank than the Father, we say:

1. The two titles are given to the Lord Christ in the Creed: "We believe in one Lord Jesus Christ ... true God out of true God". This reminds us of the words of st. Thomas to Him after the Resurrection, "*My Lord and my God*" (John 20: 28).

2. Each of the three Persons is called "Lord"; the Son, the Father, and the Holy Spirit. Of the Father it is said, "Then King David went in and sat before the Lord; and he said, '... O Lord, for Your servant's sake, and according to Your own heart, You have done all this greatness ... O Lord, there is none like You, nor is there any God besides You'" (1 Chr. 17: 16, 19, 20). It is written also about king Sul that "*the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and a distressing spirit from the Lord troubled him*" (1 Sam. 16: 14) (See also Isa. 61: 1).

The Holy Spirit is also mentioned in the Creed as the Life-giving Lord.

3. The sentence "*We believe in One God: God the Father*" makes clear that we believe in One God: The Holy Trinity. Then the Creed deals with the details of the Trinity: God the Father, one Lord Jesus Christ:

Jesus Christ:

The word "Jesus" means "Savior". When announcing His birth, it is written, "*you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins*" (Mt. 1: 21).

As for the word "Christ", which literally means anointed, it refers to His mission as King, Priest, and Prophet. The Prophecy of Isaiah says about Him, "*The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me because the Lord has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound*" (Isa. 61: 1).

The name "Christ" was given to whoever was anointed with the holy oil by the prophets, whether the person was a priest, a king, or a prophet.

Aaron the high priest was anointed as a priest by Moses the prophet according to the Lord's command, "*You shall put the holy garments on Aaron, and anoint him and sanctify him, that he may minister to Me as priest. And you shall bring his sons and clothe them with tunics. You shall anoint them, as you anointed their father, that they may minister to Me as priests*"

(Ex. 40: 13-15). This Moses did, "*he poured some of the anointing oil on Aaron's head and anointed him, to sanctify him*" (Lev. 8: 12).

The kings also were anointed with the holy oil as Samuel anointed Saul king and the Spirit of God came upon him (1 Sam. 10: 1, 10), and as he anointed David king and the Spirit of the Lord came upon him also (1 Sam. 16: 13).

An example of anointing the prophets is the command of the Lord to Elijah the prophet, "*And Elisha the son of Shaphat ... you shall anoint as prophet in your place*" (1 Kgs. 19: 16) and it so happened.

Each of those anointed was called "Christ of the Lord"

And when King Saul persecuted David and wanted to kill him but he fell in the hands of David, the friends of David advised him to kill Saul, but David refused and said, "*The Lord forbid that I should do this thing to my master, the Lord's anointed, to stretch out my hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the Lord*" (1 Sam. 24: 6).

The Lord God called those His anointed, He said, "*Do not touch My anointed ones, and do My prophets no harm*" (Ps. 105: 15).

As for our Lord Jesus Christ, He is not just an anointed one like the others but Christ or "Messiah" as they used to call Him.

This is clear in the words of the Samaritan woman who said to Him, "*I know that Messiah is coming (who is called Christ). When He comes, He will tell us all things*". And Jesus said to her, "*I who speak to you am He*" (Jn. 4: 25, 26). Then

the woman said to the people of her city, "*Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did, could this be the Christ?*" (Jn. 4: 29). Afterwards the people of Samaria said to the woman, "*we ourselves have heard Him and we know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world*" (Jn. 4: 42).

The Lord Christ is distinguished for all the anointed ones because He was anointed with the oil of gladness more than His companions (Heb. 1: 9). Besides, in Him the three missions of the anointed existed; for He is King, Priest, and Prophet at the same time, and furthermore Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world.

The Jews were waiting the Messiah (Christ the Savior), therefore st. John the apostle included certain miracles not mentioned in the other gospels to prove that Jesus is the Christ.

At the end of his gospel, st. John wrote, "*And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name*" (Jn. 20: 30, 31). And of course this Christ is the core of all the Old Testament prophecies and symbols.

It is noticed that the Lord Christ did not call Himself Jesus Christ except on Maundy Thursday in His long speech with the Father before going to Gethsemane Garden (Jn. 17: 3). But the father apostles repeated this name many times when talking about Him. They used to call Him as in (Rom. 1: 3) "*Jesus Christ our Lord*"; "*The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all*" (2 Cor. 13: 14); "*To God ... be glory through Jesus Christ*

forever. Amen" (Rom. 16: 27); "*Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ*" (2 Cor. 1: 1), and many many other innumerable examples.

It is strange that some people call the Lord "Jesus" only forgetting His divinity, His glories, His Lordship and His being Christ.

But the apostles used to repeat the expression "our Lord Jesus Christ", and we say in the introduction to Bible reading in the Church, "Our Lord, God, Saviour and King of us all Jesus Christ, to whom glory be forever. Amen."

So, let us not use the word "Jesus" alone for the sake of the Lord's glory.

Now we continue with the Creed: We believe in One Lord Jesus Christ, the Only-begotten Son:

The Only-begotten Son:

The expression "Only-begotten" is meant to distinguish His filiality to God from ours; for He alone is the Son of God of His same nature, essence and divinity.

The expression "Only-begotten Son of God" is mentioned in the following verses:

(Jn. 1: 18), "*No one has seen God at any time. the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him*". It means that He made Him known to us, for He said, "*He who has seen Me has seen the Father*" (Jn.14: 9).

(Jn. 3: 16), *“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”*

(Jn. 3: 18), *“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.”*

(1 Jn. 4: 9), *“In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him”*

(Jn. 1: 14), *“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth”*

The expression “only begotten Son” distinguishes Him from all humans who are called sons of God though not having God’s nature.

We are sons of God which means believers, as st. John says in the beginning of his gospel, *“But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in Him”* (Jn. 1: 12). God called us His children out of His great love toward us as st. John says, *“Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God”* (1 Jn. 3: 1), or as a kind of adoption as st. Paul the apostle says, *“ But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons”* (Gal. 4: 4, 5) (See also: Rom. 8: 23).

We are not sons, of the nature and essence of God. The only One of God's nature and essence and of His divinity is our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore He is called also "**The Son**".

This term "The Son" refers to the only-begotten Son as stated in the gospel of st. John, "*The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand. He who believes in the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him*" (Jn. 3: 35, 36); "*For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son, that all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father*" (Jn. 5: 22, 23); and also, "*For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to them, even so the Son gives life to whom He will*" (Jn. 5: 20). All these verses refer clearly to the divinity of the Son.

The divinity of the Son is also clear in the words of the Lord to the Jews, "*if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed*" (Jn. 8: 36), and in the words, "*He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life*" (1 Jn. 5: 12). And the Lord said about Himself, "*All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows who is the Son except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him*" (Lk. 10: 22).

And the term "Son of God" is used to refer to our Lord Jesus Christ only.

This is clear in (1 Jn. 5: 12), and in the question addressed by the Lord Christ to the man born blind, "*Do you believe in the Son of God?*" and when the man said, "*Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?*", the Lord answered him, "*You have both seen Him, and it is He who is talking with you.*". Then the

man said, "*Lord, I believe!*" and he worshipped Him (Jn. 9: 35-38). Here the Son of God deserves to be believed in and worshipped, for He is not an ordinary son of God as the other believers, but Son of His essence; the only begotten Son.

All people understood His filiality to God in this meaning.

In the miracles that accompanied the crucifixion, it happened that, "*the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split ... so when the centurion and those with him ... saw the earthquake and the things that had happened, they feared greatly, saying, 'Truly this was the Son of God!'*" (Mt. 27: 51-54). Of course they meant that He was the Son of God or the only-begotten Son of God not as the other people.

The Lord blessed Peter the apostle because he believed that He is the Son of God.

The Lord asked His disciples who they say He was, and when Simon Peter answered, "*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God*", the Lord blessed Him, saying, "*Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it*" (Mt. 16: 13-18). The Lord meant the rock of faith in His being the Son of God.

Even the devil knew the meaning of the term "The Son of God".

The devil knew well that this term does not refer to an ordinary believer called Son of God but a special Son having the power to work miracles , so he said to Him , “ *If You are the Son of God , command that these stones become bread* ” (Mt. 4: 3).

The devil’s followers also were aware of the miraculous divine meaning of the word “The Son of God”, therefore, they said to Him at the time of the crucifixion, “*If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross*” (Mt. 27: 40).

This same fact was in the mind of the Synhedrim members.

At the time of the trial of the Lord, the chief priests, the elders and all the council assembled and the high priest said to the Lord, “*I put You under oath by the living God: Tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God!*” (Mt. 26: 59-63). Had the high priest meant His being Son in the general sense of the word, he would not have put Him under oath to give an answer, and would not have torn his clothes when the Lord answered him, “*It is as you said*”, and said, “*He has spoken blasphemy! What further need do we have of witnesses?*” (Mt. 27: 65).

Believing that the Lord Christ is the Son of God does not only mean that He is the only begotten Son, but that He also has other attributes.

His filiality is everlasting; it is not linked to a certain time or appeared in a certain moment as in the filiality of humans as we say in the Creed, [the only begotten Son of the Father before all ages.]; it is not as the Jehovah’s witnesses and Arians say, that He got it as a reward for His obedience or at the time of baptism only!!

Nay, it is natural filiality as the ray is born from the sun, and the light from the fire.

He is the Son, meaning the Logos.

He is the uttering intellect (wisdom) of God or the rational utterance of God. The intellect (wisdom) of God existed in God since eternity, and as divine intellect (wisdom) is born of the godhead, the Father is called Father, and this happened before all ages.

Before all ages:

The Lord said to the Jews, "*Before Abraham was I AM.*" (Jn. 8: 56), it means that regarding His divinity, He existed before Ibrahim. And though it is said that He is the Son of Abraham, the Son of David, "*I am the Root and the Offspring of David*" (Rev. 22: 16). He is his Root with regard to His divinity, and his Offspring with regard to His humanity.

He is before David with regard to His divinity as He said in His soliloquy with the Father stated in (Jn. 17), "*And now, O Father, glorify Me together with You, with the glory which I had with You before the world was*" (Jn. 17: 5).

His being before the creation of the world is natural because "*the world was made through Him*" (Jn. 1: 10), and "*All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made*" (Jn. 1: 3). And st. Paul the apostle said about Him that the Father "*has in these last days spoken to*

us by His Son ... through whom also He made the worlds" (Heb. 1: 2).

Of course He , through whom the worlds have been made , must have existed before the ages , from everlasting, as the Lord said in the Book of Micah about Bethlehem Ephrathah, "*out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel , whose goings forth are from of old , from everlasting.*"(Mic. 5: 2).

He comes out of Bethlehem when born in flesh, but He is also born of the Father before all ages, from everlasting.

Daniel the Prophet said about Him, "*That all peoples, nations and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed*" (Da. 7: 14).

Light out of Light:

He is Light in the theological sense not the material sense.

He said about Himself, "*I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life*" (Jn. 8: 12). The light meant here is not of course material light. It is said of God that "*He is light*" (1 Jn. 1: 5), and about the Father, "*the King of kings and Lord of lords ... dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see*" (1 Tim. 6: 15, 16).

Some may wonder how the Lord said, "*You are the light of the world*" (Mt. 5: 14), then He said, "*I am the light of the world*" (Jn. 8: 12). What is the difference? The difference appears in the example of the sun and the moon. In the story of creation it is written, "*God made two great lights: the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night*" (Gen. 1: 16) i.e. the sun and the moon. However, the sun is light in itself, whereas the moon has no light in itself; it gives by the reflection of the light of the sun on it.

Likewise, the Lord Christ is "the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world" (Jn. 1: 9). We become light as far as we get from Him.

Through His light we see light. He enlightens us, so we give light as it is said about John Baptist, "*This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light*" (Jn. 1: 7, 8). And in the Morning Prayer we say to the Lord, [*O, true light, that enlightens every man in the world.*] and we say also [*we ask You Lord of all to enlighten our minds, hearts and understanding.*]

The Lord, by His nature, is unapproachable Light, but when He became flesh and dwelt among us, we became able to approach Him.

True God of True God:

"True God" means that He truly has the nature of God, not like the so called gods or lords who are not true God such as:

* Moses the prophet to whom God said, “*See, I have made you as God to Pharaoh*” (Ex. 7: 1). The words “as God” here do not mean that He is creator, everlasting, or almighty! Nay, Moses himself said, “*I am not eloquent, neither before nor since You have spoken to Your servant; but I am slow of speech and slow of tongue*” (Ex. 4: 10), and said also, “*I am of uncircumcised lips, and how shall Pharaoh heed me?*” (Ex. 6: 30), so the Lord said to him, “*I have made you as God to Pharaoh*” (Ex. 7: 1) which means that God gave him dominion over Pharaoh.

* Likewise, the Lord told Moses the slow of speech and tongue that He would give him Aaron his brother as a mouth for him, “*Now you shall speak to him and put the words in his mouth. And I will be with your mouth and with his mouth ... he shall be your spokesman to the people. And he himself shall be as a mouth for you, and you shall be to him as God*” (Ex. 4: 15, 16). To be as God to him means that he suggests to him what he says, not as God the Creator, and Aaron was elder than Moses, born before him.

The word “gods” was also used to refer to the gods of nations and to many humans called children of God.

In Psalm (82) it is said, “*God stands in the congregation of the mighty. He judges among the gods. How long will you judge unjustly, and show partiality to the wicked?*” (Ps. 82: 1, 2). Of course those unjust gods were not true Gods, otherwise they would have behaved as such! In the same Psalm it is written, “*I said: You are gods, and all of you are children of the Most High. But you shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes*” (Ps. 82: 6, 7). Certainly those who die and fall are not true Gods though called so.

* It is written in the Psalms, "*For the Lord is the great God, and the great King above all gods*" (Ps. 95: 3). By the word "gods" is meant the so called gods by nations but are not true Gods, and also, "*For the Lord is great and greatly to be praised. He is to be feared above all gods, for all the gods of the peoples are idols*" (Ps. 96: 4, 5). But in spite of this they are called gods.

As for the Lord Christ, He is true God, having all the attributes of divinity.

He is Everlasting, Creator, Almighty, Omnipresent, Unlimited, testing the hearts and minds, Lord of lords, Forgiver of sins ... and other attributes of God alone.

[See our book on "The Divinity of Christ" where we prove that the Lord Christ has all such divine attributes whether those mentioned in the Holy Bible or demonstrated by His works].

See for example: (Rom. 9: 5), (Jn. 1: 1); (1 Tim. 3: 16); (Acts 20: 28); and (Rev. 1: 8, 11, 17) where He is described as the First and the Last ... etc.

True God of True God

He is true God, borne of the Father who is True God. Each of the Father and the Son is True God, having all the divine attributes, capabilities, and having glory and power for ever. Amen. The word "God" here is not, as in the case of the gods of the peoples or some humans, a mere title.

Begotten not made:

The Lord Christ -as said by st. Augustine- is born twice: Everlasting birth from the Father, not through a mother, before

all ages, and birth in the fullness of time from a mother but with no father.

He is born of the Father, but not made, as He is born since eternity "*having neither beginning of days nor end of life*" (Heb. 7: 3). Since He has no beginning of days, He is not made because every creation has a beginning which is the day of being made.

This Creed provides the sound teaching contradicting the teaching of the Arians.

He is begotten of the Father as the thoughts are begotten of the mind and as the rays from the sun. Therefore, He is:

Consubstantial with the Father:

This refutes the Arian thoughts which misunderstood the words of the Lord, "*My Father is greater than Me*" (Jn. 14: 28). In fact the Father is not greater than the Son with regard to the essence because the Son is of the same nature, the same essence, and the same divinity of the Father. He is equal to Him in everything.

As for the phrase "*My Father is greater than Me*", it is said about emptying Himself in His incarnation; for it is said, "*who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross*" (Phil. 2: 6-8).

This is the condition of which He said “*My Father is greater than Me*”, that is of the image of the bondservant He took while the divinity remained unchanged.

The Father is greater than the image the Son took in His incarnation with the passions, the cross and the insults. But the godhead united with the human nature remained unchanged, not affected by the humbleness of the flesh.

That made Him able to speak and act in the flesh what suited His divinity which is equal to the Father.

He said, “*I and My Father are one*” (Jn. 10: 30); “*He who has seen Me has seen the Father*” (Jn. 14: 9); “*I am in the Father, and the Father in Me*” (Jn. 14: 10); “*that all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father*” (Jn. 5: 23); and to the paralytic, “*Son, your sins are forgiven you*” (Mk. 2: 5, 10), and He said the same to the sinful woman who washed His feet with her tears (Lk. 7: 48).

In His carnation, the Lord walked on the sea (Mt. 14: 25), rebuked the wind and the waves and calmed them (Mk. 4: 39). In His incarnation, He created a new substance in the miracle of the five loaves and two fish (Mt. 14: 17), and in the miracle of transforming the water into wine in the wedding at Cana of Galilee (Jn. 2), and also in giving sight to the man born blind (Jn. 9), in addition to many works He did which manifested His divinity. His resurrection while the tomb was closed, and entering the high room while the doors were closed (Jn. 20: 19), and His ascension into heaven, are all examples of His divinity.

Through whom all things came into being:

Here the Creed speaks about the Son as Creator, who made everything as stated in the gospel of st. John, "*All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made*" (Jn. 1: 3), and in the Epistle to the Colossians, "*All things were created through Him and for Him*" (Col. 1: 16).

Here we would ask: Who made the world? Is it the Father or the Son? And the answer is: He made everything through the Son.

"For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers" (Col. 1: 16).

He is the uttering wisdom of God; for God made everything by His wisdom and by His Word, so He is "*the power of God and the wisdom of God*" (1 Cor. 1: 24) by whom God made everything.

He descended from heaven for us and for our salvation:

The Son did many things besides the main purpose of the incarnation: that is the redemption.

* He restored for man the ideal image in which He was created, "God's image and likeness" (Gen. 1: 26, 27). But man lost this divine image till the Lord Christ came to restore to him that image through His ideal life in everything.

* He came to provide the people with the sound teaching, and to correct the wrong concepts which spread as a result of the interpretation of the ignorant leaders who shut up the kingdom of heaven against men, for they neither went in themselves, nor did allow those who were entering to go in (Mt. 23: 13). That is why He used to repeat in His Sermon on the Mount the words, "*You have heard that it was said But I say to you ...*" (Mt. 5). And they used to call Him "Good Teacher".

* He came to give the people a sound idea about God as the heavenly Father who loves them.

* He came to perform a mission towards the poor and the needy, as the prophecy of Isaiah the Prophet says about Him, "*The Lord has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim to the captives ...*" (Isa. 61: 1). Thus He presented to the world the image of the Good Shepherd as drawn in the Book of Ezekiel the Prophet, "*I will feed My flock, and I will make them lie down ... I will seek what was lost and bring back what was driven away, bind up the broken ...*" (Ezek. 34: 15).

However, The principal mission of the Lord in His incarnation was the salvation and redemption.

Had He done nothing but the redemption and salvation, this would have been sufficient, but practically Christ was to perform a mission before perfecting the redemption so as people might know Him and He might do something. Thus He performed the mission of the Teacher, the Shepherd of the lost sheep, the Model for the people, and the Heart full of love.

For us He descended from heaven:

It means that Heaven is His home.

Thus He said, *“I came forth from the Father and have come into the world. Again, I leave the world and go to the Father”* (Jn. 16: 28), and also, *“What then if you should see the Son of Man ascend where He was before”* (Jn. 6: 62). So, He was first in heaven and He descended from there, hence He says to Nicodemus, *“No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven”* (Jn. 3: 13).

Dwelling first in heaven is a proof of His divinity.

As the saints say, He is not man who became God, but He is God who became Man. He emptied Himself and took the form of a servant, and came in the likeness of men ... all for our salvation.

For salvation, man condemned to death since eating of the tree should have died, but Christ died on behalf of man, to redeem him.

The words “*descended from heaven*” do not mean that He left heaven.

He descended from heaven to earth, but continued in heaven because He is present everywhere and no place is empty of Him. That is why He said to Nicodemus, *“No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven”* (Jn. 3: 13). It means that He descended from heaven while being still in heaven.

The words “descended from heaven” means, on one side, emptying Himself or becoming of no reputation (Phil. 2: 7), and on the other side manifesting Himself to us.

He descended, that is, He left His glory taking the form of a servant and coming in the likeness of men; and moreover, *“He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross”* (Phil. 2: 7-8).

The words *“He descended from heaven”* mean that He became visible to us in flesh as the apostle says, *“great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh”* (1 Tim. 3: 16). Thus the invisible became visible.

And was incarnated:

The word “incarnated” means He took flesh, and in the Coptic language **ⲁⲥⲃⲓ ⲥⲁⲣⲉ**. It means that the divine nature united with the flesh. But how did He get that flesh? From where did He get it? He got it:

Of the Holy Spirit and of the Virgin Mary:

The Virgin could not have begotten a child by herself because she had not known a man (Lk. 1: 34). So the angel said to her explaining the matter, *“The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you”* (Lk. 1: 35).

The Holy Spirit descended hypostatically into her womb

It is an exceptional case because the Holy Spirit does not descend hypostatically on humans, but He descended on Virgin Mary for two reasons: first, that the Lord Christ might be in her womb through no man, and second, to sanctify her womb so that the baby born of her might not inherit the original sin.

Thus her conception of the Lord Christ was an immaculate conception.

This is clear in the words of the angel who announced to her, "*The Holy Spirit will come upon you ... therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God*" (Lk. 1: 35).

He is holy [He became like us in everything except sin alone] (the Holy Mass of St. Gregory). Therefore He died, not for His own sin because He was not sinful, but for the sins of others.

The words "*incarnated*" does not mean only that He took the human flesh, but that He also took the human nature complete: body and spirit. Therefore the Creed did not stop at the word incarnated but added the words "*and became Man*":

And became Man:

He became a complete man with a human nature, as the apostle says about Him, "*For there is one God and one*

Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 2: 5). It is because the judgment was against man, so the one who was to die should be a man begotten with the human nature.

Had He not been a complete Man, He would not have been like us in everything, and would not have taken our nature condemned to death.

We say this because there was a heresy which said that the Lord Christ was not in need of a human spirit to live with as He lived with the human nature united with Him, and with the Holy Spirit hypostatically united with Him. Therefore the second ecumenical council held in Constantinople in 381 A.D. excommunicated Apollinarios who spread this heresy as it limits the humanity of Christ to a mere body not a complete human nature!

Now the expression "He was incarnated and became man" is said in the Creed and in the Holy Mass as a confession of Christ's complete human nature by which He offered Himself on behalf of the humans as a sacrifice for our sins. On this the apostle says, "*one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all*" (1 Tim. 2: 5, 6).

That is why the Lord Christ insisted on the title "Son of Man" which He often repeated as it expresses that He represents Man in general in His death for sin. In the Coptic language the word is $\alpha\varphi\epsilon\rho\rho\omega\mu\iota$, that is, He became man.

He became the Holy Man who united with the divinity in the Virgin's womb since the first moment of the holy

conception whereas the womb was sanctified by the Holy Spirit who descended on her. However, st. Mary was conceived of normally, therefore she needed salvation as other humans, and she said so in her praise song, "*And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior*" (Lk. 1: 47).

He was crucified for us:

He was crucified for us at the time of Pontius Pilate.

Being crucified for us means on our behalf or instead of us.

We deserved death because we sinned; for "*the wages of sin is death*" (Rom. 6: 23), and, "*... through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned*" (Rom. 5: 12).

Then Christ -who did no sin deserving death- came to die on behalf of the sinners who are under the condemnation of death.

By this testimony the thief on the Lord's right defended the Lord, saying to the other blaspheming thief, "*you are under the same condemnation, and we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds, but this Man has done nothing wrong*" (Lk. 23: 41).

Even Pilate who judged finally that He should be crucified, said to the Chief priests and rulers of the Jews who sent Christ to him, "*I have found no reason for death in Him*" (Lk. 23: 22, 14). Then he said to them, "*I am innocent of the blood of this*

just Person" (Mt. 27: 24). Thus the Just was crucified for us who deserved death.

"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, everyone, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Isa. 53: 6).

He died to redeem us by His death, and the redemption means that the just dies for the guilty. The sinner dies because of his sin, but the just -in the redemption- dies for the sin of another, to redeem him of the sentence of death. There was none righteous, not one, *"They have all turned aside, they have together become corrupt; there is none who does good, no, not one"* (Ps. 14: 3).

Christ is the Holy who can die for the others.

When announcing His birth, angel Gabriel said to the holy Virgin, *"that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God"* (Lk. 1: 35). And when st. Peter the apostle reprimanded the jews for crucifying Christ, he said to them, *"But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you"* (Acts 3: 14). And st. Paul the apostle said about Him, *"For such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens"* (Heb. 7: 26). Though He is holy, He carried our sins.

In His crucifixion, He was not a sinner but bearer of sins.

He bore the sins of the others; the sins of the whole world, the sins of the past, the present and the future. St. John the apostle said, *"... if anyone sins, you have an advocate with the*

Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world." (1 Jn. 2: 1, 2). And st. John the Baptist said about Him *"The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world"* (Jn. 1: 29).

The Lord Christ reminds us of the sacrifices and burnt offerings of the Old Testament which were only a symbol of Him.

In the Old Testament, the sinner had to offer a sacrifice for the propitiation of his sins. The sacrifice was an innocent animal on which the sinner should put his hand and confess his sins on its head. Putting the hand on the head of the sacrifice means that the sinner agrees that the sacrifice be in his place and that his sins be transferred to it so that it might die on his behalf. Those innocent animals which were slaughtered were not sinners but bearers of sins; the sins of those who believe in the propitiation and redemption and agree that those animals be a propitiation on their behalf.

The sin offering was described as the most holy (Lev. 6: 25).

This description of the sin offering as "The most holy" was repeated (Lev. 6: 29). Therefore it was slaughtered in the place where the burnt offering was slaughtered, and the latter was described as *"a sweet aroma to the Lord"* (Lev. 1: 9, 13, 17). This is the same description given to the grain offering *"a sweet aroma to the Lord"*, *"most holy of the offerings to the Lord"* (Lev. 2: 2, 3, 9, 10). Likewise, the trespass offering was described as *"most holy"* and, *"In the place where they kill the burnt offering they shall kill the trespass offering"* (Lev. 7: 1, 2).

Thus the Lord Christ was a sin offering, a trespass offering and most holy when He bore the sins of the world, and was also a sweet aroma to the Lord.

Those offerings that bore the sins were burnt outside the camp (Heb. 13: 11), "therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate". He was crucified outside the gate because we -being sinners- were considered outside the camp.

He went outside the gate on our behalf that He might bring us into the camp.

He was crucified for us, He died for us, that we may have life through His death. They challenged Him, saying, "*If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross*" (Mt. 27: 40), "*If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him*" (Mt. 27: 42) (Mk. 15: 32). But He did not do that because He wanted to die for us that we may be saved through His death.

But why did He choose to die on the cross?

First: Because this kind of death is the most painful, by which all His blood would be shed and all His nerves cut, in addition to the pains caused by the nails which scraped against His body.

Second: Because the pains of the cross continue for a longer time. For instance separating the head, burning or hanging may take only a moment or a few moments and other deaths may take a few minutes, whereas crucifixion continued

for three hours, from the sixth to the ninth hour besides the time of preparation for the crucifixion.

Third: The cross is a sign of defaming and an announcement of the punishment since it is on a high place visible to all people in the city and outside it.

Fourth: Death on the cross was considered in the Old Testament -in the Mosaic Law (Deut. 21: 22, 23)- a curse, as it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree" (Gal. 3: 13). So, the Lord Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law by bearing the curse instead of us on the cross.

The death on the cross is then a shame, thus it is said of Him, "*Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross*" (Phil. 2: 8).

He replaced us in the crucifixion, the death, the shame, and the curse.

Not this only, but also:

He fasted instead of us because He was not in need of fasting.

He descended into the baptism of repentance on our behalf for He needed not to be baptized or to repent. And in His obedience to all the commandments of the Law "to fulfill all righteousness " He was in our place presenting to God the Father the practical image of the perfect Man though there was no perfection on the earth as all people have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. He presented to the Father a perfect law without sin, doing all the time what pleased Him (Jn. 8: 29).

Christ was crucified on our behalf, and it is said in the Creed that He was crucified for us at the time of Pontius Pilate.

It is a historic event which the Creed included to establish exactly the time at which it took place and the Roman ruler in whose reign it happened.

And suffered:

Proving that the Lord Christ has suffered is very important.

But why is it so important? ... Lest some would think that the unity of the divinity and humanity in the Lord Christ protected the human nature from suffering!

If this had been true, the crucifixion would have been mere formality, and Christ would have not paid the wages of death to the Divine Justice. God forbid!

The pains of the cross are an established fact, as Isaiah the prophet prophesied, "*A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief ... He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities ... Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin ...*" (Isa. 53: 3-10).

Because of the great pain on the cross, He said, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (Mk. 15: 34);

and because of the sweat and blood that came out of Him, He said, “I thirst!” (Jn. 19: 28).

The Lord Christ has actually suffered true agonizing pains, and the Father left Him to suffer and was pleased to bruise Him. However the words “why have You forsaken Me?” Do not mean that He was separated from the Father. God forbid! They mean in fact that the Father left Him to suffer and did not remove the pain away. Therefore the church celebrate the Passion Week every year and fast every Friday to the memory of the passions of the Lord Christ.

The Lord Christ never used His divinity to give rest to His human body.

Not only did He do so at the time of crucifixion but also throughout His incarnation on the earth. When He fled from the sword of Herod to Egypt, He could have struck Herod unto death by the power of His divinity, but He did not do so, nor used His divinity.

In His fast on the Mount, His divinity could have protected His body from hunger, but He did not do; for it is said “*afterward He was hungry*” (Mt. 4: 2). Thus He suffered hunger, and did not use His divine power to give comfort to His body. He did not even agree to turn the stones into bread as Satan suggested to Him !!

Throughout the time of His incarnation on the earth, He suffered hunger and thirst, fatigue and pain, and He did not use His divinity at all to prevent pain. Furthermore when He carried the cross to Golgotha (Jn. 19: 17), He fell because of great fatigue and Simon the Cyrenian carried it for Him (Mk. 15: 21). He could have carried the cross by the power of His

divinity without the Cyranian, but He did not do, nor did He use His divinity in stopping those who insulted and struck Him (Mt. 27: 29-31).

He prophesied before the crucifixion about these pains:

He said to His disciples, *“He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes and be killed, and be raised the third day”* (Mt. 16: 21); *“And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.”* (Mk. 8: 31); *“And how is it written concerning the Son of Man, that He must suffer many things and be treated with contempt?”* (Mk. 9: 12) (Lk. 9: 22); and again He said, *“... so also the Son of Man will be in His day. But first He must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation”* (Lk. 17: 25).

Then after His resurrection He said that the prophets had prophesied in the past about His passions.

He rebuked the two disciples from Emmaus, saying, *“O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory”* (Lk. 24: 25, 26). And He said to His disciples, *“Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day”* (Lk. 24: 46).

The offerings of the Old Testament was a symbol of the sufferings of Christ:

The Passover Lamb for example was a symbol of the Lord Christ, as it is said, *“For indeed Christ, our Passover, was*

sacrificed for us" (1 Cor. 5: 7). And the passover was required to be roasted in fire (Ex. 12: 8), which is a symbol of the passions. Moreover, the burnt offering which was a symbol of Christ in satisfying the divine justice and being a sweet aroma to the Lord (Lev. 1: 9), was required to be "*on the hearth upon the altar all night until morning, and the fire of the altar shall be kept burning on it ... And the fire on the altar shall be kept burning on it; it shall not be put out*" (Lev. 6: 9-12). All these fires were a symbol of the divine justice that was satisfied in such a burnt offering until it turns into ashes (Lev. 6: 10). What more passions can realize the symbol ... !

The passions of the cross are obviously expressed in the psalm which says,

"They pierced My hands and My feet; I can count all My bones" (Ps. 22: 16).

In description of the passions of the cross that were inflicted on the body and soul the same psalm says , "*My heart is like wax ; it has melted within Me. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and My tongue clings to My jaws*" (Ps. 22: 14, 15).

And was buried:

His body was laid in the tomb after being bound in strips of linen with the spice by Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, "*They took the body of Jesus and bound it in strips of linen with the spices, as the custom of the Jews is to bury. Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. So there, they laid Jesus ...*" (Jn. 19: 40-42); "*And the women who had*

come with Him from Galilee followed after, and they observed the tomb and how His body was laid” (Lk. 23: 55).

The tomb where the Lord was buried had been hewn out of the rock, and when Joseph laid Him in it, he rolled a stone against the door of the tomb (Mk. 15: 46); *“And Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses observed where He was laid” (Mk. 15: 47).*

This tomb was made secure and the stone sealed and a guard was set by the priests and Pharisees who went to Pilate and asked to do that because they feared that His disciples come by night and steal Him away and say to the people that He has risen from the dead (Mt. 27: 62-66).

This event - which is summed up in that Joseph the Arimathean and Nicodemus bound the body of the Lord Christ and laid Him in a new tomb hewn out of the rock and a large stone was rolled against the door of the tomb while many women saw that, and the priests and Pharisees set guards and sealed the stone - is a proof of His resurrection, because how could His disciples steal Him in the presence of the guards, the stone, and the seal! Moreover, it was Saturday evening (Mk. 15: 42) and people were at rest according to the commandment (Lk. 23: 56).

However, in spite of all this, the Lord Christ arose and the empty tomb became a proof of His resurrection.

He arose from the dead:

On the third day He arose from the dead in accordance with the scriptures.

The resurrection of the Lord Christ differs from the resurrection of any other person in the following:

1. The Lord Christ arose by Himself not raised by anyone.

There were three persons who came to life in the Old Testament: The son of the widow of Zarephath which belongs to Sidon, who was raised by Elijah the prophet (1 Kgs. 17: 22); the son of the Shunamite woman, who was raised by Elisha the prophet (2 Kgs. 4: 25) ; and the third who was put after his death in the tomb of Elisha the prophet and when he touched the bones of Elisha he revived and stood on his feet (2 Kgs. 13: 21).

And three people were raised by the Lord Christ: The son of the widow of Nain (Lk. 7: 15); the daughter of Jairus (Lk. 8: 55); and Lazarus (Jn. 11: 43, 44).

St. Paul also raised the young man Eutychus (Acts 20: 10), and st. Peter raised Tabitha (Acts 9: 40). All of those were raised by others, but the Lord Christ is the only One who arose by the power of His divinity. He arose, but they were raised.

2. He alone arose in a glorious body.

St. Paul said about our bodies on the general resurrection, *"we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body."* (Phil. 3: 20, 21).

This glorious body of the Lord Christ could - in the resurrection - come out of the tomb that was closed with a big

stone against the door . He could also enter the upper room while the doors were shut and the disciples assembled (Jn. 20: 19). In this glorious body He could ascend into heaven and a cloud received Him while the disciples were looking (Acts 1: 9, 10).

He ate with the disciples after the resurrection, and showed them His wounds to prove to them that He has risen as they thought Him a spirit (Lk. 24: 37-43).

3. The Lord Christ is the only One who arose and did not die again.

All those who were raised died again to wait for the general resurrection, whether those raised in the Old Testament, or those raised by the apostles. But the Lord Christ arose and continued alive and is still alive unto the end of ages. So it is not strange to see some people swear by the living Christ or pray to the living Christ.

St. Paul called the Lord *"the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep"* (1 Cor. 15: 20).

He is the first who arose from the dead and did not die again. That is what He Himself said to st. John in the Revelation, *"I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold I am alive forevermore. Amen"* (Rev. 1: 17, 18).

The resurrection of Christ was a very important matter of which the apostles preached and the jews were very troubled.

The Book of the Acts say, *“with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all”* (Acts 4: 33). This annoyed the chief jews because **proclaiming Christ’s resurrection is a proof of His divinity and His righteousness and that the jews, in crucifying Him, were oppressive, thus His blood is required of them.**

This made the jews call the apostles and say to them, *“Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man’s blood on us!”* (Acts 5: 27, 28). But the apostles reprimanded the jews, saying, *“you denied the Holy One and the Just, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, and killed the Prince of life”* (Acts 3: 14, 15).

4. The resurrection of Christ is a proof of His power and His victory, and a proclamation that He will raise us with Him.

He is the only One who overcame death by His resurrection and trod death by His power. He gave us the promise of our resurrection, *“For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead”, “Christ, the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ’s at His coming”* (1 Cor. 15: 21-23).

This hope in the resurrection of the dead is due to the resurrection of Christ.

As st. Paul says also, *“But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is vain and your faith is also vain. Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God If in this life only we have*

hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable. But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.” (1 Cor. 15: 13-20).

Had the Lord Christ not risen, He would have been like any ordinary person, whose enemies overcame and death prevailed upon Him!!

But He arose because *“in Him was life”* (Jn. 1: 4), and because He is *“the Prince of life”* (Acts 3: 15), and the resurrection and life (Jn. 11: 25) as He said to Martha the sister of Lazarus before raising him.

The resurrection of the Lord Christ was a matter which He announced to His disciples before His crucifixion:

He told them that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day (Mt. 16: 21), (Mk. 8: 31) and (Lk. 9: 22).

After His resurrection He told them that what was going to happen had been mentioned by the prophets.

He said to them, *“Thus it is written and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day”* (Lk. 24: 46). And the angels said to the women who came to the tomb bringing spices, *“Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen! Remember how He spoke to you when He was still in Galilee, saying, ‘The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of the sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again’”* (Lk. 24: 5-7).

The Lord's resurrection on the third day was consistent with the symbol in the Book of Jonah:

When the Jews asked Him for a sign after He had done many signs, He reprimanded them, saying, "*An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth*" (Mt. 12: 39, 40). He referred by this to His death and resurrection the third day.

He arose from the dead on the third day in accordance with the scriptures:

Being included in the holy scriptures and evangelized by the apostles are evidences of the importance of the resurrection.

He ascended to the heavens and sat down at the right hand of His Father:

Of course He ascended in the body.

The Godhead does not ascend or descend. The Godhead is present up and down and in between; in heaven and on the earth and between both. He fills all and is present everywhere.

He ascended in the body as we say in the Mass of st. Gregory [**upon Your ascension to heaven in the body ...**].

The disciples saw Him ascending in the body, "*While they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of*

their sight" (Acts 1: 9). Of course this was in the body because they could not have seen the Godhead.

The Lord ascended to heaven in the glorious spiritual body.

It is the spiritual body in which we will rise, as the apostle says in his Epistle to the Corinthians, "*It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man*" (1 Cor. 15: 44, 49). This spiritual body in which we will rise conforms with the body of the Lord Christ in His resurrection, "*who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body*" (Phil. 3: 21).

The miracle of the ascension is not a challenge to gravity.

It is a miracle of the glorious spiritual body which is not subject to the gravity phenomenon.

Only the material body is subject to gravity, so the glorious heavenly body in which the Lord ascended into heaven had nothing to do with gravity and there was no challenge to the earth gravity.

We, likewise, in the general resurrection, shall be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thess. 4: 17), and this will not be a challenge to the earth gravity because gravity has no power over the heavenly spiritual bodies in which we shall rise. How much rather is the ascension of the Lord Christ after His resurrection!

The words “ascended to heavens” means ascended to the heaven of heavens.

No one has ever ascended to the heaven of heavens, not even Elijah and Enoch. As the Lord said to Nicodemus, *“No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven”* (Jn. 3: 13).

The expression “heaven of heavens” is mentioned also in Solomon’s prayer on the consecration of the temple as he said to the Lord, *“but will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain You. How much less this temple which I have built!”* (1 Kgs. 8: 27). It is mentioned also in the book of Psalms, *“Praise the Lord from the heavens; praise Him in the heights! Praise Him, you heavens of heavens ..”* (Ps. 148: 1, 4).

The heaven of heavens is the highest height. If we considered all these heavens the earth, the heaven of heavens would be their heaven. It is the place of God’s throne and glory (Mt. 5: 34).

He sat down at the right hand of His Father:

This fact is included in many places of the New Testament as well as in a prophecy in the Psalms.

* (Mk. 16: 19): *“So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God”.*

* (Heb. 8: 1): *“Now this is the main point of the things we are saying: we have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens”*.

* (Heb. 1: 3): *“... when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become so much better than the angels”*.

* (Heb. 12: 2): *“Jesus ... who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God”*.

* (Mt. 26: 64): *“hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven”*. This was said by the Lord before the council.

* (Acts 7: 56): *“Look, I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God”*. This was what St. Stephen said at the time of his being martyred as *“he, being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God”*.

* (Ps. 110: 1): *“The Lord said to my Lord, ‘Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool”*

But what does sitting at the right hand of the Father mean?

God has no right or left hand, because only a limited being has a right and a left side, and God is unlimited.

Besides, there is no space at the right side of God that allows another being to sit in.

And if the Son sits at the right hand of the Father in this sense of occupying a space, the words of the Lord will not then apply as He said, "*I am in the Father, and the Father in Me*" (Jn. 14: 11). There will only be a touch line since They will be sitting side by side.

What do the words "right hand" mean then?

In the Biblical Terminology the right hand refers to power, righteousness, or honor.

In the sense of power the Psalmist said, "*The right hand of the Lord does valiantly. The right hand of the Lord is exalted; the right hand of the Lord does valiantly. I shall not die, but live*" (Ps. 118: 15-17); "*Save with Your right hand, and hear me*" (Ps. 60: 5; 108: 6). And in the praise song of Moses, he said, "*Your right hand, O Lord, has dashed the enemy in pieces*" (Ex. 15: 6).

The words refer also to honor as when Jacob was blessing Joseph's sons and he laid his hand on the head of the younger. It meant giving him higher honor (Gen. 48: 17-19). This was what the psalmist meant when saying, "*At Your right hand stands the queen*" (Ps. 45: 9). Symbolically, this refers to the honor given to the holy Virgin. In the same sense the psalm says, "*The Lord is at Your right hand; He shall execute kings in the day of His wrath*" (Ps. 110: 5).

And on the Day of Judgment the Lord set the righteous at His right hand, and the wicked at His left, which means that the right hand refers to righteousness and honor. Therefore, we call the thief who won the promise of paradise while on the cross "*the thief on the right of the Lord*". It was also beautiful

that the angel who announced to Zacharias the birth of John appeared to him standing on the right side of the altar of incense (Lk. 1: 11).

Hence “the right hand of God” means His power, righteousness, honor or glory, and “sat” means settled.

When the Lord Christ ascended to heaven, he settled in power, glory, and honor as in the beginning. This means that all accusations and insults against Him falsely out of envy such as saying of Him that He is a deceiver (Mt. 27: 62), He does not keep the Sabbath (Jn. 9: 16), He casts out demons by Beelzebub (Mt. 12: 24), and that He is a Samaritan and has a demon (Jn. 8: 48), all these accusations and insults have ended as He ascended to heaven and sat at the right hand of the Father.

Sitting at the right hand of His Father means the end of emptying Himself, as it is written that He made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men (Phil. 2: 7). In this state He endured the weakness of the human nature; He experienced hunger, thirst, fatigue and sleep. But all this came to an end by His sitting at the right hand of the Father, and the weakness in which He was arrested, insulted, strapped, and crucified, this also came to an end.

In His second coming He will come in power and glory

He shall also come back in His glory to judge the quick and the dead:

He will come in the glory of His divine nature, not in a new glory which He will obtain. It is the glory which He had

before the world was (Jn. 17: 5), and which He forsook in His incarnation when He was born in a manger, but He restored when He ascended to heaven and sat at the right hand of the Father. So He said, “... *He comes in His own glory, and in His Father’s, and of the holy angels*” (Lk. 9: 26).

How amazing and great are these words, “*He comes in His own glory*”, and they are repeated, “*For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to His works*” (Mt. 16: 27) ! The glory of His Father is His own glory and the opposite because He and His Father are one with regard to the glory of the divinity.

His Second coming will be for judgment.

He comes to reward each according to His works. This is repeated in (Mt. 25) where He says, “*When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left ...*” (Mt. 25: 31-46).

This coming for judgment is evident in the last chapter of the Book of Revelation where He says, “*I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to everyone according to his work*” (Rev. 22: 12).

His coming for judgment will be in the end of ages.

In the parable of the wheat and tares He explains, “*the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels.*”

Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His Kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire ... Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father ..." (Mt. 13: 39-43).

In this Second coming for judgment, the general resurrection will take place.

"... all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth- those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation" (Jn. 5: 28, 29).

So, the Second Coming will be accompanied by the general resurrection, judgment and the end of ages.

He will judge both the quick and the dead, that is, those who will be still alive when He comes, and those who will be dead and rise, who have done good, or evil. And the apostle says about His judgment, *"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad"* (2 Cor. 5: 10).

By this judgment the Lord Christ will come into His everlasting Kingdom as the Creed says.

Of whose kingdom there will be no end:

The prophecy of Daniel the prophet says, *"His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His*

kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed" (Da. 7: 14). Of this endless kingdom Angel Gabriel said to the holy Virgin Mary, *"you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a child ... He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end"* (Lk. 1: 31-33).

His kingdom is a spiritual kingdom not an earthly one limited by a time.

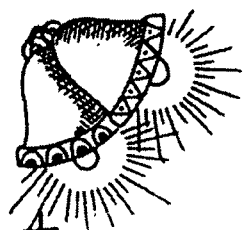
It is the kingdom which the thief on the Lord's right hand longed and said, *"Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom"* (Lk. 23: 42). And because the kingdom was far away in time, after many generations, the Lord said to the thief, *"Today you will be with Me in Paradise"* (Lk. 23: 43).

Paradise is the pledge of the kingdom, therefore, the one who enters Paradise will enter the kingdom.

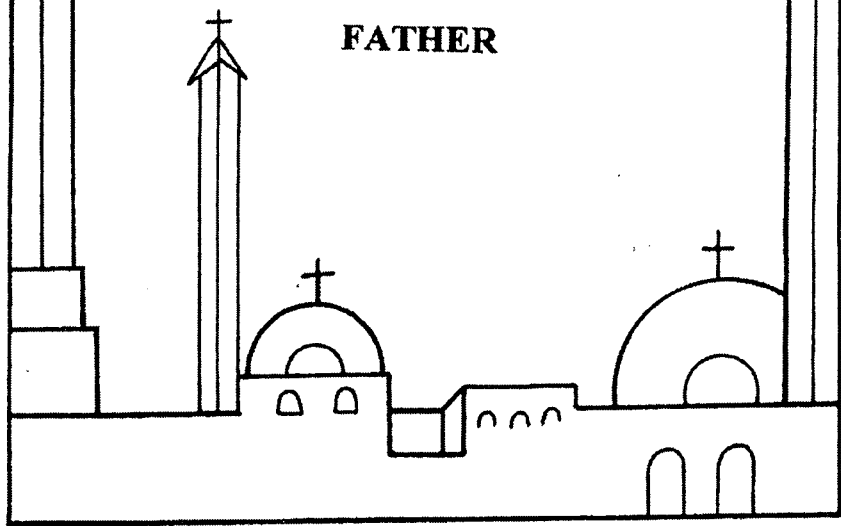
Now the next part of the Creed is about the Holy Spirit.







**TRULY WE BELIEVE IN
THE HOLY SPIRIT, THE LIFE-GIVING
LORD, WHO PROCEEDS FROM THE
FATHER**



[Truly we believe in the Holy Spirit
the Life-giving Lord, who proceeds
from the Father. We worship and glorify
Him with the Father and the Son.]

We believe in the Holy Spirit:

We believe that God is alive; by His Spirit. And the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God the Father and the Spirit of the Son.

And because He is the Spirit of God, He is Holy: the Holy Spirit. So the Lord, when giving His disciples the Sacrament of Priesthood, said, *“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”* (Jn. 20: 22, 23). And about commencing their ministry, He said, *“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth”* (Acts 1: 8).

St. Paul the apostle also said to the bishops of the church in Ephesus, *“Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers ...”* (Acts 20: 28), and to the Jews in Rome, he said, *“The Holy Spirit spoke rightly through Isaiah the prophet to our fathers ...”* (Acts 28: 25).

Sometimes, the words “the Spirit” are meant to refer to the Holy Spirit.

Examples of this are:

* *"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches"* (Rev. 2: 29; 3: 6, 13, 22). By the Spirit is meant of course the Spirit of God.

* The words of the Lord to Nicodemus about baptism, *"unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God"* (Jn. 3: 5). The Lord meant by this the regeneration of the water and the Holy Spirit.

* It is written about the apostles on the Day of Pentecost that they began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance (Acts 2: 4). The Spirit here is the Holy Spirit.

* The gifts of the Spirit mentioned in (1 Cor. 12) are the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the Lord or the Spirit of God as evident in the Holy Bible:

* (Isa. 61: 1) *"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the Lord has anointed Me ..."*.

* (2 Cor. 3: 17) *"Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty"*.

* (Ezek. 36: 27) *"I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes"*.

* (Joe. 2: 28) *"I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophecy your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions"*.

* (Ps. 139: 7) *"Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence?"*;

(Ps. 51: 11) *"do not take Your Holy Spirit from me"*.

The Holy Spirit being the Spirit of the Father is clear in the following verses:

The words of the Lord Christ to His disciples, "*for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you*" (Mt. 10: 20); "*for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit*" (Mk. 13: 11); and also (Lk. 12: 12).

The Holy Spirit being the Spirit of the Son, or the Spirit of the Lord Christ, is evident.

St. Paul the apostle says, "*God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts*" (Gal. 4: 6). And st. Peter the apostle says, "*searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ*" (1 Pet. 1: 11).

The fact that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the Father and the Spirit of the Son undoubtedly demonstrates the unity of the Holy Trinity.

The Godhead of the Holy Spirit:

The Godhead of the Holy Spirit was denied by Macdonius and for this reason he was excommunicated by the Second Holy Ecumenical Council of Constantinople in 381 A.D. The same council therefore emphasized the divinity of the Holy Spirit in the Creed in the words, [Truly we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Life-giving Lord, who proceeds from the Father. We worship and glorify Him with the Father and the Son]. The term "Lord" here means "God".

* The Godhead of the Holy Spirit is clear in the words of st. Peter the apostle when reprimanding Ananias (the husband of Sapphira) saying, "*why has Satan filled your heart to lie to*

the Holy Spirit . . . You have not lied to men but to God” (Acts 5: 3, 4).

*** The words of st. Paul the apostle are likewise clear concerning the dwelling of the Holy Spirit within us:**

St. Paul says, *“Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you?”* (1 Cor. 6: 19); *“Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?”* (1 Cor. 3: 16). In these verses, st. Paul once said *“the temple of the Holy Spirit”*, and the other time *“the temple of God”*, which signifies that it is the same.

*** The Godhead of the Holy Spirit is also evident in the words *“The Lord is the Spirit”*** (2 Cor. 3: 17). The Lord Christ Himself asserted this when He said to the Samaritan woman, *“God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth”* (Jn. 4: 24). As God is Spirit, He is then the Holy Spirit, He is the Father, and He is the Son.

*** God’s power to create is a proof of the divinity of the Holy Spirit.**

The Power to create is an attribute of God alone, as the Psalmist says, *“These all wait for You, that You may give them their food in due season ... You take away their breath, they die and return to their dust. You send forth Your Spirit, they are created”* (Ps. 104: 27-30).

*** The omnipresence of the Holy Spirit is another proof of His divinity.**

The Psalmist says, *“Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend to heaven,*

You are there ; if I make my bed in hell , behold, You are there ...” (Ps. 139: 7, 8). The omnipresence is an attribute of God alone ...

*** The gifts to people demonstrate the divinity of the Holy Spirit.**

In the First Epistle to the Corinthians, st. Paul says, *“There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. ... And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy ... but one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills”* (1 Cor. 12: 4-11). All these are called by the apostle *“gifts of the Holy Spirit”* (Heb. 2: 4). Of these gifts st. James the apostle also said, *“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning”* (Jas. 1: 17). So all gifts are sent by God through His Holy Spirit.

*** Another evidence of the divinity of the Holy Spirit is that the Lord Christ has an eternal Spirit.**

The Holy Bible says, *“How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God ...”* (Heb. 9: 14). The Holy Spirit is thus the Spirit of the Lord Christ, and eternity is an attribute of God alone. This verse then is a proof of the divinity of Christ and of the Holy Spirit.

*** Being the Life-giving is also a proof of the divinity of the Holy Spirit.**

The life-giving:

It is well known that the Spirit is the source of life, thus He is the Life-giving. **This is evident in His raising the bones (Ezek. 37) .**

Ezekiel the prophet said, “ *The hand of the Lord came upon me and brought me out in the Spirit of the Lord, and set me down in the midst of the valley ; and it was full of bones ... And He said to me, ‘ Son of man , can these bones live ?’ So I answered, ‘O Lord God , You know.’ . . . and breath come into them, and they lived.*” (Ezek . 37: 1-3, 10) . And the Lord said, “ *I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live* ” (Ezek. 37: 14).

The Book of Revelation likewise says about the two witnesses who were killed, “*the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet*” (Rev. 11: 11). And the Lord truly says, “*It is the Spirit who gives life*” (Jn. 6: 63). It is also written, “*God, who gives life to the dead*” (Rom. 4: 17); “*God who gives life to all things*” (1 Tim 6: 13). No doubt it is God who gives life to the dead through His Holy Spirit. He puts His Spirit in them and they live (Ezek. 37: 14).

In many texts the Holy Bible teaches us that it is God who brings death and gives life (2 Kgs. 5: 7) (Deut. 32: 39), and His Spirit gives life (Ezek. 37: 14), which proves the divinity of the Holy Spirit as the Creed teaches us. The Creed teaches us also that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father.

Who proceeds from the Father:

This is said by the Lord when speaking about the Holy Spirit, “*the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father*” (Jn. 15: 26).

However our brothers the Catholics added to the Creed the Latin word “Filioque” which means “and from the Son”.

This addition caused division within the church which is still existing.

It is true that the Lord Christ said, “... *the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father*” (Jn. 15: 26), “*If I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you*” (Jn. 16: 7), but we should know the following:

There is a great theological difference between procession and sending. Sending takes place within the scope of time, whereas procession is from eternity.

The Lord Christ sent the Holy Spirit to the apostles on the Day of Pentecost, but the Holy Spirit has been existing before because He is the Spirit of God. In the story of creation, it is said, “*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters*” (Gen. 1: 1, 2).

The Holy Bible tells us also about the work of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament and how He descended on the prophets and some other persons.

The Spirit of God came upon king Saul, and he prophesied (1 Sam. 10: 10, 11), then the Spirit of the Lord departed from him (1 Sam. 16: 14). Again the Spirit of the Lord came upon David (1 Sam. 16: 13), and moved upon Samson (Jud. 13: 25), then came mightily upon him (Jud. 14: 6). The Scriptures tell us also about the work of the Spirit of the Lord with Ezekiel the prophet (Ezek. 37: 1), and many texts are included in the Psalms of David the prophet about the Spirit of God.

Much can be said on the work of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament, as well as in the era between the two Testaments before the nativity of the Lord Christ.

It is said about John Baptist on announcing his birth, "*He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb*" (Lk. 1: 15), and about his mother Elizabeth that she was filled with the Holy Spirit (Lk. 1: 41). His father Zacharias also was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied (Lk. 1: 67).

And the angel said to the holy Virgin when announcing her of the birth of the Lord Christ, "*The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you*" (Lk. 1: 35). To Joseph the carpenter the angel said about the holy Virgin, "*that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit*" (Mt. 1: 20). It is also said about Simeon the elder, "*this man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord Christ*" (Lk. 2: 25, 26).

Therefore the sending of the Holy Spirit by the Lord Christ upon the disciples on the Day of Pentecost has nothing to do at all with the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father since eternity.

The Holy Spirit then is the Spirit of God; He is the Person representing life in the Holy Trinity and God is living by His Spirit. And the Holy Spirit is proceeding from the Godhead since eternity before any creation and before the birth of the disciples to whom the Lord sent Him.

For example it is said about the Son's incarnation, "*But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law*" (Gal. 4: 4, 5), but in spite of being sent to the world in the fullness of time, the Son had been born of the Father since eternity, even that all things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made (Jn. 1: 3). So, His birth since eternity is one thing and His being sent forth in the fullness of time is another different thing. The same can be said of the Holy Spirit: His procession from the Father since eternity is one thing, and His being sent forth upon the disciples on the Day of Pentecost is another different thing.

Now, lest some would think that the Holy Spirit is lower in rank than the Father and the Son, being the third Person, or being sent forth from the Father, therefore the Creed adds the words [We worship and glorify Him with the Father and the Son].

We worship and glorify Him:

We give Him the worship due to Him as the Spirit of God, and glorify Him with the father and the Son equally.

In our prayers we say "Glory be to the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, the Holy co-substantial Trinity", and start every prayer with the words "In the name of the father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, One God. Amen."

The sending of the Holy Spirit by the Lord Christ does not mean that the Holy Spirit is in a lower rank than Him. The Lord Christ Himself says, "And now the Lord God and His Spirit have sent Me" (Isa. 48: 16); "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the Lord has anointed Me" (Isa. 61: 1). This does not mean of course that the Lord Christ is lower in rank than the Holy Spirit.

The Lord has commanded us to baptize people in the name of the Father , the Son , and the Holy Spirit (Mt. 28: 19).

And st. John the apostle says in his first epistle, "*For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one*" (Jn. 5: 7).

Through the three Persons together the blessing is given:

We say, according to the teaching in (2 Cor. 13: 14), "*The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen*".

The words of the Creed [we glorify Him with the Father and the Son] do signify equality among the three Persons.

The three Persons are equal in the divine attributes of the Godhead. Each Person is Eternal, Everlasting, Creator, Omnipresent, Unlimited, Omnipotent, and in every other aspect the Holy Spirit is equal to the Father and the Son. However, we say that the Son is born of the Father before all ages, whereas the Holy Spirit is proceeding from the Father before all ages also.

As we pray to the Father, we pray to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

Many examples are found in the Hours Prayers (Agpeya) and in the Holy Bible. The prayers addressed to the **Father** are so many and so clear. An example of the prayers addressed to the **Son** is the prayer of st. Stephen the archdeacon while being martyred, where he said, "*Lord Jesus, receive my spirit*" (Acts 7: 59). Another example is the prayer which says, "O my Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me". An example of the prayer addressed to the **Holy Spirit** is the prayer of the third hour in which we say, [O Heavenly King, the spirit of truth, the comforter, who is everywhere and fills everybody ... we ask you to graciously come and dwell within us]

The creed says also about the Holy Spirit:

Who spoke in the prophets:

This is clear in the words of st. Peter the apostle:

" for prophecy never came by the will of man , but holy men of god spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit "
(2 Pet. 1: 21).

And st. Paul the apostle said to the Jews, "*The Holy Spirit spoke rightly through Isaiah the prophet*" (Acts 28: 25).

The Lord Christ said to His disciples, "*it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit*" (Mk. 13: 11). Thus st. Paul the apostle said, "*These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches ...*" (1 Cor. 2: 13). This reminds us of the words of the Lord Christ to His holy apostles, "*But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you*" (Jn. 14: 26).

Many times the Holy Spirit did speak by the mouth of David the prophet.

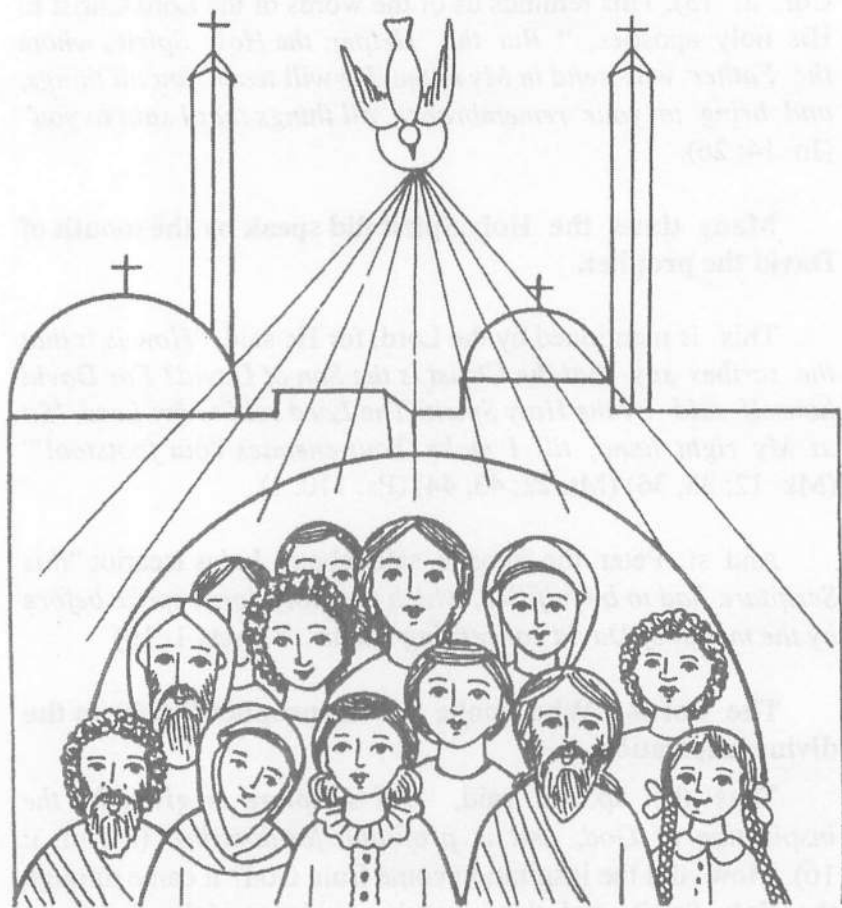
This is mentioned by the Lord, for He said, "*How is it that the scribes say that the Christ is the Son of David? For David himself said by the Holy Spirit: The Lord said to my Lord, 'Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool'*" (Mk. 12: 35, 36) (Mt. 22: 43, 44) (Ps. 110: 1).

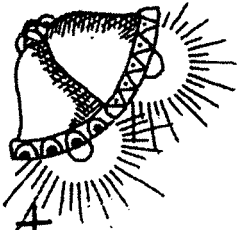
And st. Peter the apostle said about Judas Iscariot "*this Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke before by the mouth of David concerning Judas ...*" (Acts 1: 16)

The words "Who spoke in the prophets" refer to the divine inspiration.

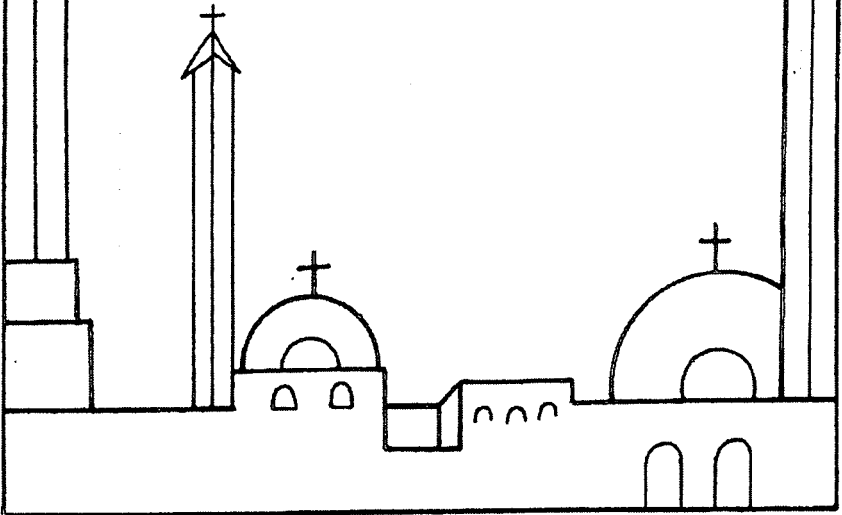
Thus the apostle said, "*All scripture is given by the inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine*" (2 Tim. 3: 16). How did the inspiration come from God? It came through the Holy Spirit, and this is another evidence of the divinity of the Holy Spirit.

By this the third part of the Creed on the Holy Trinity ends, and we come to the part concerning the church, the baptism, the second coming, and the life of the age to come.





**WE BELIEVE IN ONE HOLY
UNIVERSAL & APOSTOLIC CHURCH**



The Church:

The Creed says, [We believe in One Holy, Universal, and Apostolic Church].

What is that church meant by the Creed?

The word "Church" signifies three things:

- a) The church building.
- b) The congregation.
- c) The church leaders or priests.

*** The church as a building:**

This is clear in the words of st. Paul the apostle, "*the church that is in their house*" (Rom. 16: 5), referring to Priscilla and Aquilla; and "*as I teach everywhere in every church*" (1 Cor. 4: 17).

*** The church as congregation:**

The Creed does not mean the church building when saying "One Church", but the congregation is meant.

The Book of the Acts speaks about the first Church, saying, "*And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved*" (Acts 2: 47); "*At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem*" (Acts 8: 1). By this is meant the believers who were in Jerusalem. And also, "*Peter was therefore kept in prison, but constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church*" (Acts 12: 5), which meant that the believers were praying for him. St. Paul the apostle likewise said, "*when you come*

together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you" (1 Cor. 11: 18); "*just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word*" (Eph. 5: 25, 26). By the church here is also meant the congregation of the believers for whom Christ was crucified to sanctify and cleanse them by baptism through the word, that is preaching and doctrine.

*** The church as leadership, that is the Holy Orders (Priesthood):**

With regard to controversies and reconciliation it is written, "*And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector*" (Mt. 18: 17). By "church" here is meant the church leadership, not the whole congregation. Therefore, it is written immediately after that, "*Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven*" (Mt. 18: 18).

So, in the Creed, the word "church" means the believers and their leadership.

Then the Creed explains the qualities of this church:

One Church:

*** She is One in faith, in dogma, in thought and doctrine, and in spirituality.**

The Epistle to the Ephesians says, "*There is one body, one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism ...*" (Eph. 4: 4, 5).

Since the Church is one in faith and dogma, and one in understanding and theological concepts, therefore whoever deviates from this one faith is cut by the church from her membership and the church remains one in faith. This is how the church dealt with the heretics in the holy councils.

* In the long soliloquy of the Lord with the Father, He said," *I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You ... that they may be one just as We are one*" (Jn. 17: 20-22).

* About the unity of the church , the Lord Christ said, "*And other sheep I have which are not of this fold ; them also I must bring , and they will hear My voice ; and there will be one flock and one shepherd*" (Jn. 10: 16) . This one shepherd is the Lord Christ who said in the same chapter, "*I am the good Shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep*" (Jn. 10: 11, 14).

*** She is One church as she is One Body and the Head of this body is the Lord Christ.**

This is written in the Epistles: "*Christ is head of the church*" (Eph. 5: 23) ; "*He is the head of the body, the church*" (Col. 1: 18); "*His body, which is the church*" (Col. 1: 24). So, the church is one, since the Lord Christ has one body and we all are members of His body as the apostle says," *For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones*" (Eph. 5: 30).

The church is One as she is Christ's bride.

St. John Baptist said, *"I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before Him. He who has the bride is the bridegroom, but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly ..."* (Jn. 3: 28, 29). The same meaning is stated in (Eph. 5: 31, 32, 25).

It is clear that the Lord Christ has one bride, that is the church, as the apostle said, *"I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ"* (2 Cor. 11: 2).

The bride of the Lord Christ is of course one, so refers to her the Book of Songs symbolically, *"My dove, my perfect one, is the only one"* (Song. 6: 9).

Since the Church is one, what then does the word "churches" in the Holy Bible signify?

The word "churches" signifies the places where the church is established, to distinguish each from the other.

It is thus said, *"Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied"* (Acts 9: 31).

And in the Book of Revelation, we hear about the seven churches in Asia, *"write in a book and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to*

Laodicea" (Rev. 1: 11). However, all these churches are members of the one Holy universal apostolic church.

She is One Church, on earth, and in heaven.

All will gather together in the heavenly Jerusalem, the tabernacle of God with men where He will dwell with them and they shall be His people (one people), and God Himself will be their God (Rev. 21: 2, 3).

This one people, or one church; the whole congregation of the believers who will inherit the kingdom, are those seen by st. John the visionary, and he said, "*After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes ... These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb*" (Rev. 7: 9-14).

This one church in heaven includes the angels as well.

She comprises the holy angels and the spirits of the holy humans who departed and will depart till the end of the ages. All of them -angels and humans- are God's people, God's children, and citizens and members of the household of God (Eph. 2: 19).

A Holy Church:

Of this holy church st. Peter the apostle said, "*you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God*

through Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 2: 5); *"but you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light"* (1 Pet. 2: 9).

She is holy by the blood of Christ.

The Book of Revelation says, *"To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood"* (Rev. 1: 5). And in the First Epistle of John, he says about the Father, *"the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin"* (1 Jn. 1: 7). And Psalm 51 says, *"Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean"* (Ps. 51: 7). This hyssop, after dipping in the blood of sacrifice of the Old Testament, was used for purging and atoning.

The Church is holy in the baptism.

In baptism, the old man dies and a new man rises who is holy and in the image of Christ, as the apostle says, *"For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ"* (Gal. 3: 27), that is, you have put on the righteousness, holiness and cleanliness of the Lord Christ. The apostle says also, *"just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish"* (Eph. 5: 25-27).

The church is holy in the Sacrament of the Holy Anointment.

In the Sacrament of the Holy Anointment, one is anointed with the holy myron to be sanctified by the Holy Spirit who dwells in those who are baptized and they become holy temples

to God as the apostle says, "*Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?*" (1 Cor. 3: 16); "*Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God?*" (1 Cor. 6: 19); "*For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are*" (1 Cor. 3: 17); and also, "*Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ?*" (1 Cor. 6: 15). This proves that the bodies are holy.

The church is the congregation of believers, and the believers were called, in the days of the apostles, holy.

So st. Paul said, "*Greet every saint in Christ Jesus*" (Phil. 4: 21), and sent to the saints who were in Ephesus (Eph. 1: 1), saying, "*who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him ...*" (Eph. 1: 3, 4). And in his epistle to the Hebrews st. Paul said, "*holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling*" (Heb. 3: 1).

Hence, those who have victory in God sing, "*Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty! . . . O King of the saints!*" (Rev. 15: 3). And in the Second Coming, the Lord will come "*with ten thousands of His saints*" (Jud. 14). Therefore the apostle says, "*so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints*" (1 Thess. 3: 13).

The Church is holy because she is in God's image with regard to holiness.

The Lord says to us, "*Be holy, for I am holy*" (1 Pet. 1: 16) (Lev. 11: 44) ; "*perfecting holiness in the fear of God*" (2 Cor. 7: 1); "*For this is the will of God, your sanctification*" (1 Thess. 4: 3).

Since the Church is holy, no sinners are allowed to exist in it.

St. Paul the apostle therefore says, "*Put away from yourselves the evil person*" (1 Cor. 5: 13). He says explaining this, "*I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner - not even to eat with such a person*" (1 Cor. 5: 11).

This applies to anyone deviating from the proper faith, as st. John the apostle says, "*If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; for he who greets him shares in his deeds*" (2 Jn. 1: 10, 11).

So the church cut the heretics from her membership.

An ex-communication judgment is issued against such people, and they are expelled from the congregation as they have lost the holiness of teaching, and they are ready to spread their deviations among the members of the church if they do continue with them.

Just as holiness is required in the church on the earth, so it is required in heaven.

It is said of the city of God, the heavenly Jerusalem, "*But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles or causes*

an abomination or a lie ..." (Rev. 21: 27). Indeed, there is no communion between light and darkness, nor fellowship between righteousness and lawlessness (2 Cor. 6: 14), neither on the earth, nor in heaven ...

The church is holy in her life and her spiritualities, in her doctrines and her sacraments, and in her leadership and her people ... in everything.

A Universal Church:

The church is universal, gathering all believers together in the unity of faith.

This universal church brought together the Jews and the gentiles, as well as all nationalities, peoples, and tongues in one faith.

This universal church brought together all the local churches in one church embracing all, in one creed, under uniform church laws. The local churches are not like islands in an ocean, each one separate from the other, but they all form the one universal church. This church brings all believers together in communion, in one faith, in the holy sacraments, and in partaking from one altar. Some call her the Catholic Church, but for fear of mixing up with the catholic denomination, some call her the Universal Church.

This universal church held Ecumenical Councils formed of the leaders of the church who came together to consider the matters of faith and church organization so that all churches might follow one doctrine. The first Ecumenical Council was

held in Nicaea in 325 A.D., in which 318 of the church leaders; patriarchs and bishops, participated.

Nowadays, due to differences in faith among churches, it has become uneasy to hold an ecumenical council for the Universal Church. However, we might be able -God willing- to convene a council which would bring together only our Orthodox Churches.

An Apostolic Church:

The term “apostolic” signifies two meanings: that she is a church founded by the apostles, and that she follows the teachings of the apostles, not opposing these teachings.

This is what the apostle said, *“having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone”* (Eph. 2: 20).

This foundation of the apostles is the teaching they had received from the Lord Christ.

The Lord Christ said to them, *“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations ... teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you”* (Mt. 28: 19, 20). And st. Paul the apostle said, *“For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you”* (1 Cor. 11: 23).

That teaching which the apostles had received from the Lord they delivered to us in their epistles, in the church life, and in their laws and teachings:

This is known as the Apostolic Tradition, which the church received one generation after the other as st. Paul the apostle said to his disciple Timothy, *“And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also”* (2 Tim.2: 2).

It is then the teaching of the Lord Christ - in particular that which He handed to the apostles during the forty days following His resurrection - which they delivered to their disciples, who in turn delivered to others, then from one generation to the other until received by us. There are other things still which they did not write, but said by mouth (2 Jn. 12) (3 Jn. 13, 14), which we received through the tradition.

In addition, the life of the church in the days of the apostles is delivered to us.

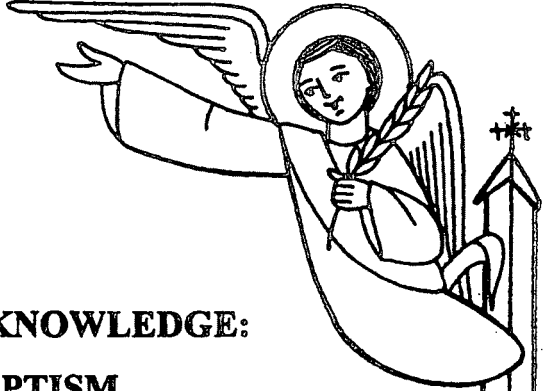
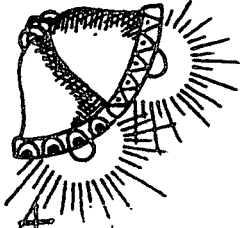
An example of this is the liturgies they prayed, the methods of baptizing and ordaining priests, all the prayers of the church sacraments and liturgical prayers. These were practiced and lived by the apostles, and continued in the life of the church throughout the ages.

Such Tradition is lived by the old apostolic church.

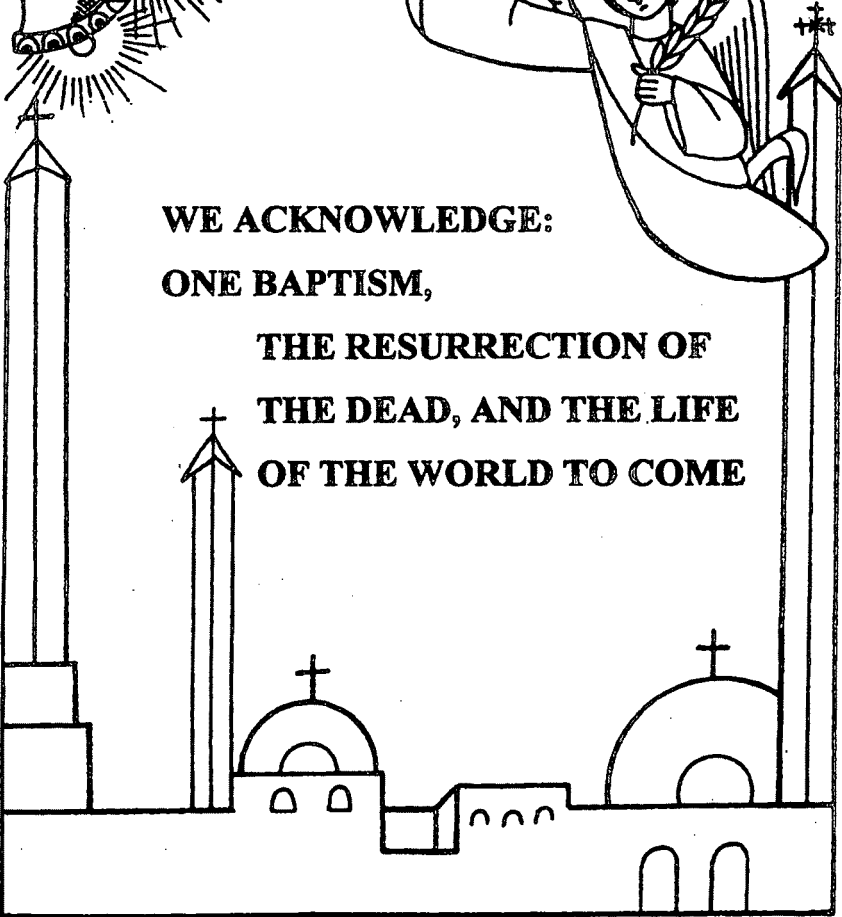
An example of this is the Apostolic Succession.

The priest today has been laid the hands on and received the holy breath (Jn. 20: 22) from his bishop. And the bishop had the same from the archbishop, the patriarch, or the pope, who in turn had this from his predecessor up to the father apostles who received the same power from the Lord Christ. This proves the seniority and authenticity of the apostolic churches.

But what about the non-apostolic churches? From where did they receive their authority?



**WE ACKNOWLEDGE:
ONE BAPTISM,
THE RESURRECTION OF
THE DEAD, AND THE LIFE
OF THE WORLD TO COME**



One Baptism for the Remission of Sins:

Baptism is the first Church Sacrament, by which a believer becomes a member of the church.

On the Day of Pentecost, the Jews believed and were cut to the heart and asked Peter and the rest of the apostles, "*Men and brethren, what shall we do?*". And Peter said to them, "*Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins*" (Acts 2: 37, 38). Then those who gladly received his word were baptized, and that day about three thousand souls were added to them (Acts 2: 41). It was not easy to baptize three thousands in one day, but it was necessary due to the importance of baptism for the remission of sins.

An evidence of the importance of baptism is the words of the Lord Christ to Nicodemus:

"Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (Jn. 3: 5).

The importance of baptism for salvation is evident in the words of the Lord to His disciples before His ascension, "*He who believes and is baptized will be saved*" (Mk. 16: 16).

In the Book of Acts, it is noticed that baptism always followed faith.

This happened on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2: 41); and when the city of Samaria believed (Acts 8), when the Ethiopian

eunuch believed (Acts 8: 36-37), when Cornelius and the men that were with him believed (Acts 10: 47, 48), when Lydia the seller of purple believed (Acts 16: 14, 15), when the keeper of the prison in Philippi believed (Acts 16: 31-33) ... etc.

The importance of baptism for the remission of sins is evident in the story of the conversion of Saul of Tarsus.

The Lord appeared to Saul while on his way to Damascus, and called him to be a chosen vessel to bear the name of the Lord before Gentiles (Acts 9: 3-16). Then Ananias of Damascus said to Saul, "*Brother Saul ... why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord*" (Acts 22: 16).

This great man, who became Paul the apostle -in spite of the great call- was in need for baptism to wash away his sins! His sins were not washed away neither by the divine call, nor by his accepting faith!

Baptism is so important and so critical that st. Paul the apostle says, "*For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ*" (Gal. 3: 27).

This means putting on righteousness of Christ by baptism. This is due to the fact that baptism is death with Christ and rising with Him as the apostle says, "*buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him*" (Col. 2: 12). In such burial, our old man is crucified with the Lord and is dead (Rom. 6: 6) as the apostle explains, "*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" (Rom. 6: 4, 5).

Baptism then is death and regeneration: death of the old man, and birth of a new man after the likeness of Christ. It is birth of water and the Spirit (Jn. 3: 5).

As the apostle says, *"according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit"* (Tit. 3: 5). Through this regeneration we become children of God and children of the church, as one of the saints once said, [God will only be a Father to you if the church becomes your mother].

In baptism we obtain the deserts of Christ's blood for forgiveness, so all sins preceding baptism -whether the original serious sin or the personal actual sins- are forgiven. And since the original sin is forgiven, there is no need for repeating baptism. As for the actual personal sins following baptism, they are forgiven through the Sacrament of Repentance.

As baptism is so necessary for the remission of sins, and for entering the kingdom, according to the words of the Lord (Jn. 3: 5), therefore we baptize children. [See our book "Comparative Theology - Part I"]

Baptism should be preceded by accepting faith as the Lord said, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved" (Mk. 16: 16). This applies to adults, whereas children are baptized on the basis of the faith of their parents.

Being death with Christ, and death being one, baptism is therefore one.

One Baptism:

The apostle says , “ *one Lord, one faith, one baptism*” (Eph. 4: 5).

It is one baptism, but has pre-requisites:

1. One sound faith. For this we accept the baptism of the churches that are one in faith with us.

2. Baptism to be perfected by a recognized priest, not subject to any judgment. This is the rule established by the Council of Carthage in 276 A.D. presided by st. Cyprian.

3. Baptism to be perfected in a sound way: dipping the baptized thrice in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Mt. 28: 19).

Since it is one baptism, it is not repeated in case one deviates from Christian faith then returns to it.

The Resurrection of the Dead:

We believe in the resurrection of all the dead: righteous and wicked.

As said in the gospel of st. John, “*the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth - those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation*” (Jn. 5: 28, 29).

The resurrection of the Lord Christ was the firstfruit of our resurrection.

Chapter 15 of the First Epistle to the Corinthians speaks mainly about the resurrection of the dead. The apostle says, *"But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming"* (1 Cor. 15: 20-23).

We shall rise in spiritual heavenly bodies which are not material.

The apostle says about the raised bodies, *"It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body ... And as we have born the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man ... flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God"* (1 Cor. 15: 42-50). He said also, *"We also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body"* (Phil. 3: 20, 21). This means that we shall rise in a body conforming to the glorious body in which the Lord rose.

The general resurrection will be followed by the Judgment, and the latter will take place in the Second coming of the Lord.

So it is written, *"For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works"* (Mt. 16: 27); and also, *"When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him,*

then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left.” (Mt. 25: 31-33). Then the judgment begins and ends with the words, *“And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life”* (Mt. 25: 46).

The Book of the Revelation speaks also about the Judgment; says:

“And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire” (Rev. 20: 12-15).

In the resurrection those who are alive will be caught up, and their bodies will be transformed.

Those who have fallen asleep, the Lord will bring with Him in His Second coming as the apostle says (1 Thess. 4: 14), because the Lord will come *“with ten thousands of His saints”* (Jud. 14); *“For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord”* (1 Thess. 4: 16, 17).

In the resurrection, at the moment of being caught up, we shall change into spiritual bodies.

As the apostle says, "*we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed -in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality*" (1 Cor. 15: 51-53). It means that we shall put on the spiritual heavenly bodies which are not subject to corruption or death.

So, three serious events will take place successively, namely:

1. The Second Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with His angels and ten thousands of His saints.

2. The resurrection of the dead: both the righteous and the wicked.

3. The general Judgment of which the apostle says, "*For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad*" (2 Cor. 5: 10).

At that point the present world will come to an end, and the life of the ages to come start, and everyone in his rank.

The End of the Present World:

The Lord Christ said that heaven and earth will pass away (Mt. 5: 18).

Then as st. John the visionary says, *“Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea”* (Rev. 21: 1); *“Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them”* (Rev. 20: 11).

About the end of the present earth, st. Peter the apostle says:

“But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up” (2 Pet. 3: 10).

The Book of the Revelation gave explanation to many things related to the end of this world.

For example the seven plagues that happened to the world after the trumpets of the seven angles had sounded (Rev. 8), and all what the seven thunders uttered (Rev. 10: 3, 4).

The Lord mentioned the signs that will precede His coming; He said,

“Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken” (Mt. 24: 29).

Something similar happened in the Revelation when the sixth seal was opened (Rev. 6: 12-16).

The Life of the World to Come:

At the end, the Lord Christ will deliver the Kingdom to God the Father, then He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power, all things will be subjected to Him so that God may be all in all. And the last enemy that will be destroyed is death (1 Cor. 15: 24-28).

The life of the world to come will begin in the heavenly Jerusalem where God will dwell with men (Rev. 21: 2, 3), as the righteous who wait in Paradise will move to that City.

There shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying, nor pain, for the former things have passed away, and He who sits on the throne says, "*Behold, I make all things new*" (Rev. 21: 4, 5).

The heavenly Jerusalem will have no need of the sun or the moon to shine in it because the glory of God illuminates it. There will be no night there, and none will enter it except those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life (Rev. 21: 23-27).

The righteous will then enjoy the promises made by the Lord to those who overcome (Rev. 2, 3), as well as things which God has prepared for those who love His holy name: that which "*Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man*" (1 Cor. 2: 9).

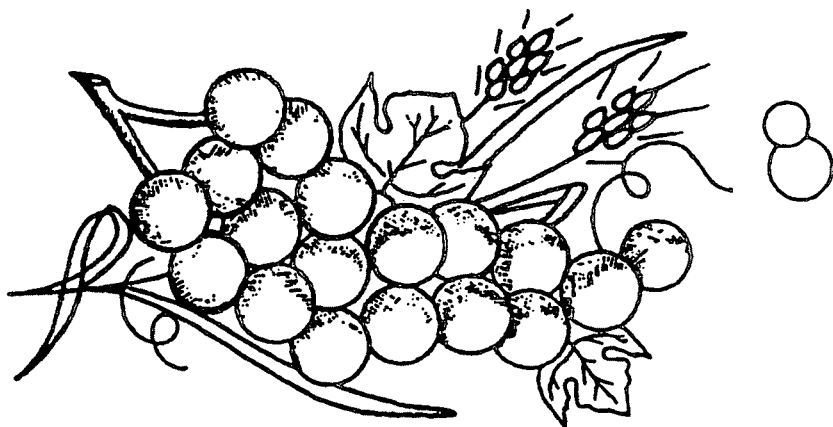
The life of the world to come is a life of everlasting happiness for the righteous in heaven, where they will live like the angels of God in heaven (Mt. 22: 30). God will be their happiness and their joy, "*They shall see His face, and His name*

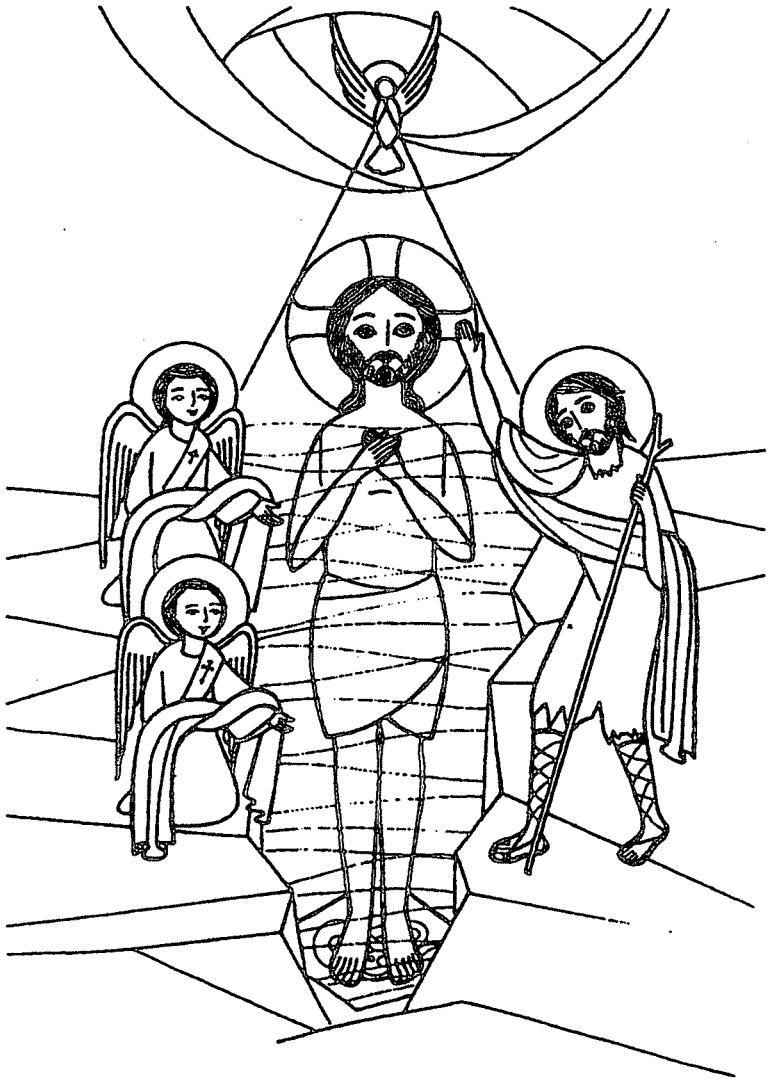
shall be on their foreheads ... And they shall reign forever and ever” (Rev. 22: 4, 5).

As st. Paul the apostle says, *“For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known” (1 Cor. 13: 12).*

It is not easy or possible for us to explain the life of the world to come.

Even st. Paul the apostle, when he was caught up into Paradise, he said that he heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter (2 Cor. 12: 4). What then can be said about the everlasting happiness? What can be said about the life with God, with all His angels and heavenly hosts, and ten thousands of His saints? How can getting acquainted to all those be expressed?!







In This Book

*In the Name of the Father,
the Son & the Holy Spirit.
One God; Amen.*

In this book, various dogmas are expounded in a concentrated way, among which are:

- * Trinitarianism
- * Godhead of the Son
- * Godhead of the Holy Spirit
- * Incarnation & Redemption
- * Resurrection & Ascension
- * The Universal Apostolic Church
- * Baptism
- * The end of the present world
- * The life of the world to come

Pope Shenouda III

