The Orthodox Creed

What you believe and base your life on is your creed. Some of the earliest Christian creeds are found in the Bible. For example, the words of faith expressed by St. John in his Gospel, “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” (John 3:16). Another very early Christian creed that we find in the Scriptures is the declaration, “Jesus Christ is Lord” (1 Corinthians 12:3; Philippians 2:11). The word “Creed” derives from the Latin word “Credo” meaning, “I believe.” The Creed is the essence of our Christian faith. All the Christian churches all over the world have the same belief, and those who do not hold to it are not deemed Christians.

Creating the Creed

There was a need for a short summary of the faith to which those who were baptized could subscribe. Some of the earliest Christian creeds were written for this reason. The great heresies in early church history prompted the writing of the Creed. The “Nicene Creed” is the one formulated by St. Athanasius (the 20th Pope of Alexandria), the Hero of the first Ecumenical Council of Nicaea in the 4th century (324AD). This Council of 318 Bishops approved this Creed under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to refute the false teaching of Arius and his followers, who denied the divinity of Christ. This Creed was completed in the second Ecumenical Council of Constantinople (381AD) convened by 150 Bishops against Macedonious’ heresy against the divinity of the Holy Spirit. The third Ecumenical Council at Ephesus (431AD), convened by 200 Bishops against Nestor’s heresy, added the introduction to the Creed. This Creed is shared by all the churches the world over.

The Nicene Creed is expressing the faith of the Universal Church. It is the summary of our beliefs, based on the Biblical facts without any contradiction with the Holy Scripture.

We need to know, what we believe, and in whom we believe, if we want to be Christians. We cannot remain silent about what God had done for us. We must communicate our faith expressed through this Creed. This is why we have the Nicene Creed as a summary of our Christian faith to live by.

The Nicene Creed

We share with you the words of the Nicene Creed:
Introduction:

“We exalt you, the mother of the true Light. We glorify you, O saint, the Theotokos (Mother of God), for you brought forth unto us the Savior of the whole world; He came and saved our souls.

Glory to You, our Master, Our King, Christ, the pride of the Apostles, the crown of the martyrs, the joy of the righteous, the firmness of the churches, the forgiveness of sins.

We proclaim the Holy Trinity in one Godhead. We worship Him. We glorify Him.

Lord have mercy. Lord have mercy. Lord bless. Amen”

The Creed:

“We believe in one God, God the Father the Pantocrator (Almighty). Who created heaven and earth, and all things, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all ages; Light of Light, true God of true God, begotten not created, of one essence with the Father, by whom all things were made; who for us, men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnated of the Holy Spirit and of the virgin Mary, and became man. And He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, suffered and was buried, and on the third day He rose from the dead, according to the Scriptures, and ascended into the heavens; and sat at the right hand of His Father, and also He is coming again in His glory to judge the living and the dead, whose kingdom has no end.

Yes, we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Life-Giver, who proceeds from the Father. Who, with the Father and the Son, is worshiped and glorified, who spoke in the prophets. And in one holy, Catholic (Universal) and Apostolic Church. We confess one baptism for the remission of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the coming age. Amen.”

What we believe

The main facts of faith, as stated in this Creed, have existed since before the official form of this Creed. Some of these facts were included in the laws of the Apostles, the laws of Apollides, and in some sayings of the early church fathers.

The Creed includes the following main facts of the Christian faith:

- The oneness of God
- The Holy Trinity, the Godhead, and the role of the Father, The Son, and the Holy Spirit
The Incarnation, Redemption, and Salvation

- Baptism for the remission of sins
- The resurrection of the dead and the life to come in eternity
- The second coming of Christ for judgment
- The One Holy Catholic Apostolic Church

We Believe in One God

We believe in the Holy Trinity, as One God. The Lord Christ taught us this principle of faith by saying, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19). 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” (Exodus 20:2, 3), “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is One…” (Deuteronomy 6:4; cf. 5:6, 7). These words are quoted by Christ as the first and greatest commandment (Mark 12:29). The Prophet Isaiah mentioned this fundamental fact of faith many times in His book, such as, “I am He. Before Me there was no God formed, nor shall there be after Me” (Isaiah 43:10, 11; cf. 44:6, 9; 46:9; 48:12).

Both the Old Testament and the New Testament mention the oneness of God. St. John says, “For there are three who bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one” (1 John 5:7). St. James says, “You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe and tremble!” (James 2:19). The apostle means the intellectual faith not the inner actual faith. He who does not believe in One God is lower in faith than the devils!

God is the One who is perfect and absolute life, simplicity, goodness, truth, love, wisdom, knowledge, and purity. He is the perfection and super-perfection of everything that man knows as holy, true, and good. He is ineffable, inconceivable, invisible, incomprehensible, ever-existing and eternally the same.

Oneness and Trinity

We do not believe in the plurality of God, but in one God. Some may wonder, how the three can be one? According to mathematics 1+1+1=3 and not 1; but according to the same rules 1x1x1=1 not 3. The Lord Christ says, “The Father is in Me, and I in Him” (John 10:38), “I and My Father are one” (John 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.
With the Intellect (the Son) and the Spirit (the Holy Spirit), God is One Being. Man, created in God’s image, is a being with intellect and spirit; and the three are one. Likewise, fire, for example, with the heat and light coming out of it are one; and 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, i.e. God’s Wisdom (1 Corinthians 1:23, 24); and 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.

**God is not Seen**

God the Father is not seen by anyone, as St. John says, “No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him” (John 1:18). Moses wanted to see God, but He told him, “You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live” (Exodus 33:20). We cannot see the Father, but we can see Him in His incarnate Son, who came in the likeness of men (1Timothy 3:16; Philippians 2:7, 8). It was the Son who appeared in the Old Testament because no one has seen the Father. “When the fullness of the time had, 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. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, ‘Abba Father!’” (Galatians 4:4-6).

**God the Creator**

Creation means that God has brought everything and everyone which exists from non-existence into being. God alone is uncreated and ever-existing. The Scriptural description of creation is given primarily in the first chapter of the book of Genesis. He created the heavens and the earth and all those who dwelt therein (Genesis 1:1; Exodus 20:11), both visible and invisible (Colossians 1:16). These invisible creatures include the angels, heavenly hosts, spirits, etc. We believe that the six days of creation are six eras, as the Bible says, “But, behold, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day” (2 Peter 3:6).

The Psalmist praises the Lord for His creation saying, “By the Word of the Lord the heavens were made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth. He gathers the waters of the sea together as a heap; He lays up the deep in storehouses. Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him. For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast” (Psalms 33:6-9). We must notice here the presence and action of God’s Word and God’s Spirit. God the Father makes all that exists by means of His Divine Word, “For He spoke and it came to be,” and by His Divine Spirit, “the breath of His mouth,” who “moved upon the face of the waters” (Genesis 1:2).
The farthest extent a human mind can reach is to be a maker, not a creator, because whatever he invent is made from the material created by God. Indeed man, with the utmost intelligence and knowledge, made everything with the mind which God created in him.

**God is Omnipresent**

God is present everywhere, as 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. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there Your hand shall hold me” (Psalms 139:7-10). Our Lord Jesus, in order to have man realize that the true God, His Father, is not bound to one or another particular place, taught us to pray to the “Father” in the heavens; for wherever men move on the face of the earth, over the seas or in the air, the heavens surround them with the presence of God. The Lord who is over all is also through us all and in us all, as St. Paul says, “One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all” (Ephesians 4:6). By His Word and His Holy Spirit, God “fills all in all” (Ephesians 1:10, 23). Thus, the Apostle Paul also proclaimed to the Athenians, that whether men realize it or not, “In Him we live and move and have our being... He is not far from each one of us” (Acts 17:27-29).

**God Almighty**

He governs all the creation; nothing is out of His control and dispensation. All the creation includes the heavenly and the earthly, whether the rational or the irrational; all are under His control. Even the devil is under His control. God put limits on the devil in every trial or temptation he has with us. We have many Biblical events to prove this fact:

* God allowed the devil, in his first trial with Job, to use his power over Job’s property and household; and the devil could not go beyond that limit (Job 1:8-12).

* In the second trial, God permitted the devil to touch Job’s body but to spare his life (Job 2:6), and the devil obeyed.

* In the miracle of casting out demons from the person who had Legion (Mark 5:1-13), the demons begged the Lord Jesus to send them to the swine to enter them, and He permitted them.

* In the Revelation, God sent His angel to bind Satan for a thousand years, after which Satan will be released (Revelation 20:2, 7).

* The Lord gave His disciples power over the unclean spirits to cast them out (Matthew 10:1); and they returned joyfully from their mission saying to Him, “Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name” (Luke 10:17).

* We are also given by the Lord the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions and all the power of the enemy, that is Satan (Luke 10:19).
We may wonder why all these troubles, disasters and damages happen in the universe if God is almighty and in control. Gideon asked the angel of the Lord, “O my Lord, if the Lord is with us, why then has all this happened to us” (Judges 6:13); and the Prophet Jeremiah asked a similar question, “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?” (Jeremiah 12:1). The Almighty God, for sure, has some purpose for that, according to His un-comprehendible wisdom, maybe 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 may say that there is a difference between God’s intent and God’s permission. God’s intent is ultimately good; however, He gives the 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 the Almighty God observes, charges, punishes, corrects and sometimes shows longsuffering. He may also interfere and stop the work of the wicked, since the free will given to them is limited and under the control of the Almighty. The Almighty God interfered many times to save His righteous from the council of the wicked (See 2 Sam 15:31; Esther 7:10). Therefore David, who was saved from the plots of King Saul, sang, “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” (Psalms 124:2).

God permits oppression but spares not the oppressor, but judges for the oppressed. For example, 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 (1 Samuel 31:8-19). Absalom also did unjustly to his father David, and he did not escape God’s punishment (2 Samuel 18:9-15). God permitted Cain to attack his brother Abel and kill him, but Cain did not escape punishment (Gen 4:8-14).

The Almighty God also prevents many afflictions, and many tribulations, temptations and damages. He stops them before happening and without our knowledge. The temptations and troubles which He permits may fulfill the words of the Bible, “All things work together for good to those who love God” (Romans 8:28), “My brethren count it all joy when you fall into various trials” (James 1:2).
What We Believe in the Holy Spirit

We believe that God is Spirit (John 4:24; 2 Corinthians 3:17), and He is alive by His Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God; and He is the Person (i.e. Hypostasis) representing life in the Holy Trinity; therefore, there was no time when there was no Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God is the Spirit of the Father and the Spirit of the Son; always existing with the Father and the Son; perpetually worshipped and glorified with them in the oneness of the Holy Trinity. Therefore He is divine, holy, eternal, and uncreated. The Lord Jesus called Him “The Holy Spirit” as in His saying to His disciples, “Receive the Holy Spirit...” (John 20:22); and about commencing their ministry, He said, “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you...” (Acts 1:8). St. Paul also called Him “The Holy Spirit” during his speech to the bishops of Ephesus, “Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers...” (Acts 20:28). To the Jews in Rome, he said, “The Holy Spirit spoke rightly through Isaiah the Prophet to our fathers...” (Acts 28:25). You may also find verses mentioning the Holy Spirit by the word “The Spirit” (Revelation 2:29; 3:6, 13, 22; John 3:5; Acts 2:4; 1 Corinthians 12).

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the Lord God:

“The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the Lord has anointed Me...” (Isaiah 61:1).

“Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty” (2 Corinthians 3:17).

“Do not take Your Holy Spirit from me” (Psalms 51:11).

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the Father (cf. Joel 2:28; Ezekiel 36:27; Psalms 139:7).

“For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you” (Matthew 10:20).

“God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts” (Galatians 4:6).

“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.
Godhead of the Holy Spirit

The Lord Christ Himself asserted the Godhead of the Holy Spirit by saying, “God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:24). God is Spirit, He is then the Holy Spirit, and both the Father and the Son (in His divinity) is Spirit as well. This fact is evident in the writings of the apostles:

St. Paul says, “The Lord is the Spirit” (2 Corinthians 3:17).

St. Peter reprimanding Ananias saying, “Why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit… You have not lied men but to God” (Acts 5:3, 4).

St. Paul wrote that the Holy Spirit dwells within us, “Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you... Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?” (1 Corinthians 6:19; 3:16).

The Divine Attributes of the Holy Spirit

The following attributes are of God alone; and attributing them to the Holy Spirit proves His divinity:

The Holy Spirit has the power to create:

In the story of creation, the Holy Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters (Genesis 1:2). It is the same Spirit, who is the “breath of life” for man, made in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:30; 2:7). Generally speaking, the Spirit in Hebrew is called “breath” or the “wind” of Yahweh. 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” (Psalms 104:27-30).

The Holy Spirit is omnipresent:

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” (Psalms 139:7, 8).

The Holy Spirit gives His gifts to people:

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 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 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” (James 1:17). Therefore all gifts are sent by God through His Holy Spirit.

**The Holy Spirit is eternal:**

The Holy Spirit, being the Spirit of Christ, is eternal, as St. Paul says, “… How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God…” (Hebrew 9:14). It is proof of the divinity of Christ and of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is the life-giver: The Holy Spirit is the giver of life. 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 came into them, and they lived.” (Ezekiel 37:1-3, 10). And the Lord said, “I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live” (Ezekiel 37:14). No doubt it is God who gives life to the dead through His Holy Spirit. He puts His Spirit in them and they live. 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” (Revelation 11:11). The Lord Christ says, “It is the Spirit who gives life” (John 6:63).

**The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth:**

“When He, the Spirit of truth has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak, and He will tell you the things to come” (John 16:13; c.f. John 14:25; John 15:26).

**The Holy Spirit Proceeds from the Father:**

While speaking about the Holy Spirit, the Lord Christ said, “The Spirit of Truth who proceeds from the Father” (John 15:26). The Holy Spirit, according to these words, proceeds only from the Father; but was sent by the Son, according to the words of the Lord Jesus, “… the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father” (John 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” (John 16:7).

There is a great theological difference between procession and sending of the Holy Spirit. Sending the Holy Spirit takes place within the scope of time, whereas the procession of the Holy Spirit is from eternity. The Lord Christ sent the Holy Spirit to the apostles on the day of Pentecost, while the Holy Spirit has been existing before that event, from everlasting, because He is the Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit of God was existing in the beginning of creation (Genesis 1:1, 2), and even before that because we could not imagine that God was existing without His Spirit for one moment. We should not understand that the sending of the Holy Spirit by the Lord Christ means that He is in a lower rank than the Father or the Son. The Holy Spirit is equal to the Father and the Son (1 John 5:7; Matthew 28:19); and we worship and glorify Him with the Father and the Son saying, “Glory be to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, the holy co-substantial Trinity.” According to the Prophet Isaiah, the Lord Jesus,
the incarnate Word of God, says, “And now the Lord God and His Spirit have sent Me” (Isaiah 48:16), “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the Lord has anointed Me” (Isaiah 61:1). This does not mean of course that the Lord Christ is lower in rank than the Holy Spirit or the Father, since He was sent by them.

**The Holy Spirit in Both Testaments**

The Holy Spirit inspired the prophets to prophesize and to do God’s will, as St. Peter says, “For prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:21). He anointed the prophets, priests and kings of the Old Testament. The Holy Spirit dwelt on these anointed men of God temporarily to fulfill their duties. In the fullness of time, the Virgin Mary conceived, by the Holy Spirit, to give birth to the Son of God, the Lord Jesus. It is this same Spirit who descended on the Lord Jesus, in the Jordan River (John 1:32; Luke 3:22; Matt 3:16; Mark 1:9). Jesus is Called Christ, the Messiah (the Anointed One) of God, fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah, which He read in the synagogue, that says, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord” (Isaiah 61:1, 2; Luke 4:16-19). He commented on this reading by saying, “Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing” (Luke 4:21).

On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit descended upon the disciples of Christ, in the form of tongues of fire, with the sound of a mighty rushing wind (Acts 2:1-4). This is the beginning of the Christian Church. It is the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecy, that in the time of the Messiah, the Spirit of God will be poured out on all flesh (Joel 2:28; Acts 1:14).

The Christian Church lives by the Holy Spirit, who works in our life through the Holy Sacraments. The Holy Spirit dwells in us, as St. Paul says, “Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you... For God’s temple is holy, and that temple you are” (1 Corinthians 3:16; Romans 6:19). The fruits of the Spirit appear when one’s spirit is led by the Spirit of God. This requires that individuals share in the work of the Holy Spirit. These fruits, mentioned by St. Paul, are love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22, 23). Because of their importance in working out salvation, we cannot enter the heavenly kingdom without these fruits.

All of God’s actions towards man in creation, salvation and final glorification, are from the Father through the Son (Word) in the Holy Spirit; and all of man’s capabilities of response to God are in the same Spirit, through the same Son to the same Father.
Monotheism and The Trinitarian Faith

Our faith in its essence is a call to enjoy the experience of the One God, the Lover of mankind. The Old and New Testaments confirm the belief in the One God (Exodus 20:3-5; Deuteronomy 4:6-9; 11:18-21; Isaiah 34:10; 44:6, 8; 45:6, 21, 22; Mark 12:28-30; Romans 3:29, 30; Ephesians 4:6; 1Corinthians 8:4; Galatians 3:20; James 2:19). While the Old Testament deals with this matter in its negative aspect, its aim being to prevent the believers from worshipping idols and false gods and from practicing the abominations of the surrounding pagan nations (2Kings 21:2; 2Chronicles 28:3), the New Testament witnesses to the One God in a positive aspect, for it does not declare the oneness of God, but it deepens our faith in God by revealing the “Trinitarian” faith. In fact, this faith does not oppose “Monotheism,” but emphasizes it by revealing some mysteries of the One God and His relationship to mankind. Without the Trinitarian faith, monotheism would remain obscured.

Trinitarian Dogma

We do not believe in three divine essences, but in only one. The divine essence, in fact, exists eternally. This existence or “Being” is eternally rational, that is to say He has a “Mind”, “Wisdom,” or “Logos / Word,” begotten from His “Being” but not outside Him, nor as another divine essence. For this reason, when we call the divine Being the Father and the divine Logos the Son, we confirm that the Son is the Logos of God, so that no one misunderstands this as if there are two separate essences, the Father and the Son. So it is said that Jesus Christ is “The brightness of His (= God’s) glory and the expressed image of His person” (Hebrew 1:3). He is the image of the invisible God (Colossians 1:15), like the word is the image of the invisible mind. The son-ship of Christ to the Father declares Him as the personal manifestation of God. St. John says, “No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him” (John 1:18).

The second hypostasis is called the “Son” to confirm that He is consubstantial with the Father; and He was called the “Word” or “Wisdom” of God to indicate that they are not separated as if they are two essences. Therefore it is important to avoid completely any physical meaning when we hear the titles the “Father” and the “Son.” This does not means that God was married and brought forth another god, for there is no sex in God’s essence. The Father brings forth the Son as the sun brings forth its rays, or the mind brings forth a word. The materialistic view about God created modern feminist theology to use feminist terms while speaking of God, but God is beyond gender.
This divine Being, or the Father, is eternally alive. He has His own “Life,” that is the Spirit of God or the Holy Spirit. The divine Being is distinguished from “Life” but not separated nor has two divine essences. It is important to believe in God who is “Being, rational and alive,” one eternal essence for the three are not separated nor has One existed before the others. They are like the fire which has flame, light and heat at the same time, or the human being who has body, soul, and spirit at the same time.

**Trinitarian Dogma and the Bible**

The Trinitarian dogma is the first of all Biblical dogmas. The Holy Trinity is referred to at Jesus’ baptism, “When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I well pleased’” (Matthew 3:16, 17). St John the Baptist, who baptized Him, bore witness, saying, “I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him. I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘Upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’ And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God.” (John 1:27-33).

Our baptism, too, is performed in the name of the three Hypostases, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, according to St. Mathew (Matthew 28:19). St. Paul’s benediction enumerates them in (2 Corinthians 13:14). The three are spoken of in (John 14:16; Ephesians 2:18; 1 Peter 1:21, 22… etc.). The works and titles of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit in the New Testament declare their divinity.

The Christians, after believing in this dogma, began to see it in the Old Testament. There is not much direct speech to God’s tri-hypostasis, but you can realize this fact hidden in the picture. One of the pictures of the Holy Trinity in the Old Testament is the Trisagion in Isaiah’s vision (Isaiah 6:3). It is noteworthy that the Hebrew name of God comes in the plural form “Elohim” with a verb in a single form, referring to the plurality in One God, and in single name “Eil.” It is also obvious that the Lord God talks in the plural form, like, “Let us make man in our image” (Genesis 1:26), and “Let us go down, and there confound their language” (Genesis 11:7), in spite of the fact He emphasized being One God, “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one” (Deuteronomy 6:4).

Indeed, in the Old Testament, the dogma of the Trinity was not clear, for the Jews were surrounded by many nations worshiping idols, and the Jews themselves sometimes worshipped the gods of the surrounding nations. Certainly, if God had revealed this dogma clearly, they would have misunderstood it and believed in polytheism. Moreover, there was no need to accept this dogma before the incarnation of the Word of God and the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Church.
The First Trinitarian Formula

Before His resurrection, Our Lord Jesus Christ did not declare any Trinitarian formula. He revealed the divinity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit openly and clearly, indicating their work for our salvation. Before His ascension, He commanded His disciples to baptize in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. He gave the baptismal formula simply without using the word “Hypostasis / Persons,” because His aim was merely to give the grace of every Hypostasis by name to the believers through the baptism. So, the catechumens accept God’s fatherhood, membership of Christ’s body, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit within them.

One of the most important statements regarding the Trinitarian dogma in the Apostolic era is that of St. Paul, “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all” (2Corinthians 13:13). The Apostle witnessed to the Holy Trinity in order to reveal the divine grace, love, and communion to the believers to accept the fact that God is working in and with His believers to become partakers of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:3). In other words, the belief of the Apostolic Church is purely Trinitarian, and its effect on her preaching, worship and behavior, but does not declare this belief in a theological formula, in the modern sense.

The equality between the three hypostases is noteworthy. Therefore, it is not necessary to start mentioning the Father, then the Son, and finally the Holy Spirit. We could see many Biblical verses that have different sequences:

- “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19)
- “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all” (2 Corinthians 13:14)
- “… according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ” (1Peter 1:2)

Eternal Love

God is neither an idea nor concept that we believe in, nor a Supreme Being who is far away in heaven and isolated from our world. He is not a solid Being, but the Lover of mankind, who grants us His divine knowledge so that we may enjoy His love and feel His fatherhood. He loves to be very close to His children, to unite them with Himself, and to live within them.
God is love (1John 4:8). He created heavenly and earthly beings because of His love. He is merciful and gracious, and beneficent for He loves man. His love is eternal, for the Father loves the Son, and there was no time when the Father did not love the Son. This is obvious, when our Lord Jesus spoke to His eternal Father, saying, “You loved Me before the foundation of the world” (John 17:24).

The relation between the three Hypostases of the Holy Trinity, which is eternal and absolute, has been declared to us through God’s redeeming act. Our Lord Jesus, before being betrayed, said to His Father on our behalf, “You, Father, are in Me, and I in You, that they also may be one in Us… And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one… And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me, may be in them, and I in them” (John 17:21-26).

**Incarnation**

Only God can save the world because man cannot do it by himself. God expressed His great love for us by sending His only begotten Son to die on our behalf to save us from eternal death, as St. John says, “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” (John 3:16). Christ is the Word of God, 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” (John 1:14). The Apostle Paul says, “Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up in glory” (1 Timothy 2:16).

Christ was born of the Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 1; Luke 1), without the seed of man, “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” (Galatians 4:4). This virginal birth is the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecy, “Behold, the Virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Emmanuel” (Isaiah 7:14), and that it is, as well, the fulfillment of the longings of all men for salvation. The virginal birth is understood as a necessity because the One who is born must not be merely a man like all others who need salvation, but He is the Savior of all. He is indeed a real and perfect Man, but sinless.
**Nature of Christ**

In Christ, all that belongs to God, i.e. Godhead or divinity, united with what belonged to man, i.e. manhood or humanity, except sin. This humanity refers to the human body, soul, and spirit. He was sinless to the extent that His enemies failed to catch even one sin against Him when He told them, “Which of you convicts Me of sin?” (John 8:46), and St. Peter says about Him, “… Who committed no sin, nor was guile found in His mouth” (1Peter 2:22).

The Divine nature (God the Word) was united with the human nature which He took of the Virgin Mary by the action of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit purified and sanctified the Virgin’s womb so that the Child to whom she gave birth would inherit nothing of the original sin; the flesh formed of her blood was united with the only begotten Son. This unity took place from the first moment of the Holy Pregnancy in the Virgin’s womb. The unity between divinity and humanity is the most important declaration of the love of God for mankind, to save us. He made His humanity united His divinity without mingling, confusion, alteration or separation even for a single moment.

**Objectives of Incarnation**

**Redemption and Salvation**

Man fell in sin, was exiled from Paradise, condemned to eternal death, and heard the words, “Dust you are, and unto dust you return” (Genesis 3:19). Therefore, we needed someone else to renew the first creation and to preserve the new one that had come to be. Repentance alone fails to save man and to renew his human nature, for man had to suffer death as a natural fruit of his disobedience and leaving God, the source of life. Moses’ Law failed as well. Man waited for the Savior who can redeem him by fulfilling God’s justice and reconciling him with God, granting him the new life that conquers death. This Savior is Christ, the Messiah, about whom the prophets of the Old Testament foretold, the evangelists concentrated and the apostles preached. He is the incarnate Word of God, the only begotten Son of the Father, who was incarnate and became Man to redeem us by His suffering passions and His shed blood to save us from eternal death (John 3:16; Galatians 2:20). Through His redeeming act, He conquered our enemy, Satan, (Colossians 2:13-15; 1 John 3:1), conquered death and raised us up, in Him, to heaven (Ephesians 2:6).

**Renewal of our Nature**

God created man in His own image according to His likeness (Genesis 1:26, 27), according to God in righteousness and true holiness (Ephesians 4:24). Since the fall of the first man, Corruption affected the human nature. The image of God was tarnished and wickedness of sin affected every person, to be increased and spread from one generation to the next. All social methods to treat wickedness such as severe punishments failed to stop it, because sin is a spiritual disease; and no one is able to restore that image again. Christ, the incarnate Word of
God, came as the only true Physician to heal the body, soul, and spirit of all, revealing the fact that “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick... For I did not come to call righteous, but sinners, to repentance” (Matthew 9:12, 13; Mark 2:17; Luke 5:31). Being ill with incurable sin, man was not able to reach to God, but the True Physician came to heal us from our sin and to restore for us the image of God, “For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that was lost” (Luke 19:10).

*Example of Human Perfection*

Human perfection means the level of perfection which we could achieve by our human capabilities, and it is not absolute because absolute perfection belongs to God alone. The Law of the Old Testament was effective to build up man and to direct him to righteousness, but man, with his corrupted nature, was not able to live in human perfection according to the Bible. Therefore Christ came to renew human nature, to be able to reach this human perfection, offering in Himself the example of human perfection. He taught us the virtuous life through His life not only by words, like all prophets and teachers. He lived among us as a perfect human proving that man is now able to reach his perfection. He left us an example to follow (1 Peter 2:21, 22). He gave us His Holy spirit to dwell in us as a Helper to guide us in our way of perfection.

**Objections against Incarnation**

How could the unlimited God live in a limited human body?

How the most holy God could unite with the lowly corrupted sinning man?

How could men be able to see the invisible God?

Does the dogma of incarnation originate from paganism?

We will respond to these questions respectively.

Indeed, God is unlimited, but He is able to dwell in everyone everywhere while He is still unlimited. For example, the air which is covering the globe is also filling every lung of every human day and night; and also the sea water could fill many empty bottles while it still fills the sea. The unlimited God is able to live in us, and at the same time He is existing everywhere, and there is no place that will be void of His presence.

Incarnation doesn’t mean that God transformed or converted into man, but that God humbled Himself to unite with the components of the human nature, and at the same time He is still the Almighty God. He did that out of His great love for mankind, and to fulfill his salvation, out of His compassion, because He is the only Savior. The human body with all its needs, is not lowly because it was created perfectly by the perfect God in the best form (Genesis 1:31); and we respect this body as the best creation of God. He took His body from the Virgin by the Holy Spirit equal to our body but free from sin.
The Bible says about the invisible God, “Whom no man has seen or can see” (1 Timothy 6:16). God had said to Moses, “You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live” (Exodus 33:20). These verses are talking about seeing the divinity merely, which is for sure impossible. Therefore, when God wanted to come to us to fulfill our salvation, He took flesh to hide His divinity, as St. John declared, “No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him” (John 1:18). He came and dwelled among us, and was called “Emmanuel” which is translated, “God with us” (Matthew 1:23). So, God who revealed Himself through His Law and prophets in the Old Testament, revealed Himself, after preparing the humanity, through His incarnation among us.

There is no link whatsoever between the dogma of incarnation and paganism. The Holy Trinity in Christianity is not talking about three gods, who could marry and produce children, but rather talking about One God of three hypostasis, which means that God has essence, Wisdom (or Mind or Logos), and Spirit. Incarnation of the Son of God, as we understand it in Christianity, does not have any reference in paganism. It is impossible that the two Testaments of the Bible attack paganism at the time they quoted some ideas from it!