



I Believe...

THE FAITH OF CHRISTIANS

*The Orthodox Interpretation of
THE NICENE CREED*

By

ARCHBISHOP ANATOLY OF MOGILEV

Translated from Russian by
V. REV. JOHN KIVKO

and subsequently edited and expanded

2022



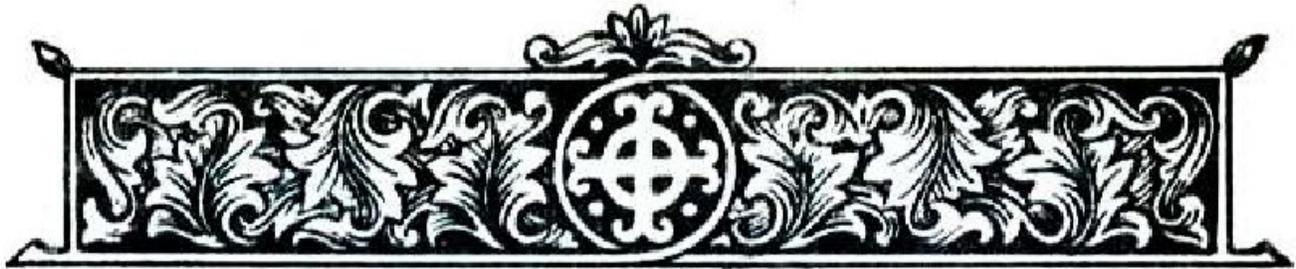
The Nicene Creed – The Symbol of Faith

I Believe

1. I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth and of all things visible and invisible.
2. And in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the only-begotten, begotten of the Father before all ages. Light of light; true God of true God; begotten, not made; of one essence with the Father, by Whom all things were made;
3. Who for us men and for our salvation came down from Heaven, and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and became man.
4. And He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered, and was buried.
5. And the third day He arose again, according to the Scriptures,
6. and ascended into Heaven, and sits at the right hand of the Father;
7. and He shall come again with glory to judge the living and the dead; Whose Kingdom shall have no end.
8. And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of Life, Who proceeds from the Father; Who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; Who spoke by the prophets.
9. In one Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church.
10. I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins.
11. I look for the resurrection of the dead
12. and the life of the world to come. Amen.

* * *

The NICENE CREED or *The Symbol of Faith* is a statement of the chief truths which the Church teaches, and which all Orthodox Catholic Christians are bound to believe. The Creed was formulated at the first two Ecumenical Councils. At the first Council, held at Nicea in 325, the first seven articles were adopted. The last five articles were added at the Second Ecumenical Council held at Constantinople in 381.



THE ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN FAITH

By

ARCHBISHOP ANATOLY OF MOGILEV

Without faith it is impossible to please God, according to the teaching of the holy Apostle Paul, because he who comes to God must believe that He rewards them that diligently seek Him (Heb. 11:6). And since no man knows the hidden thoughts and inner secrets of another person, except the human spirit which lives in him, so concerning the incomprehensible Nature of God, no man can know anything except what God Himself revealed (I Cor. 2:11). Through His unlimited goodness God revealed to His Church such knowledge about Himself which the human mind by its own powers, even by the most strenuous efforts, could not attain. If God has given us a revelation of Himself, then the most salutary use of our power of reasoning is to submit it to faith in divine revelation, to believe in the Word of God; because if we accept the testimony of men, without any comparison, it is much more worthy of our faith to accept the Divine testimony: If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater (I John 5:9). And God has verified the truth of His revelation at certain times by supernatural signs of His Almighty power – through miracles and prophecies.

Therefore, by Divine revelation and the teaching of the Holy Orthodox Church, we believe in one God (Exodus 20:2-3, Deut. 6:4, I Tim. 1:17), in three Persons, which are named in the Sacred Scriptures God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19). God the Father is un-begotten and proceeds from no one; God the Son is begotten pre-eternally of the Father, and the Holy Spirit pre-eternally proceeds from God the Father; however, all three persons of the All-holy Trinity are equal in their divinity. This Triune God is eternal (Isaiah 41:4, Ps. 90:2), omnipresent (Jeremiah 23:24), All-wise (Rom. 11:33), omniscient (I John 3:20), gracious (Ps. 145:8), righteous (145:17), all-holy (I Sam. 2:2), Almighty (Psalm 104) – in the beginning of time (by His word) He created the visible and invisible world (Gen. 1:1), i.e., He made, first of all, the blessed Kingdom of His everlasting glory, gave being to the purest spirits or Angels. At the beginning all angels were good and holy. Those of the angels who were established unwaveringly in sanctity, love and striving towards the good continually glorify God (Ps. 103:20, Isaiah 6:3) and serve Him. At the time of baptism every believer receives a Guardian Angel (Matt. 18:10). The holy Angels assist in the attainment of salvation all those who desire to inherit eternal life. Some of the angels had not remained good, they “kept not their first estate” (Jude 6), they sinned before God and fell into evil and have become eternal enemies of God and ourselves, trying in every way to subject men to sin (II Thes. 2:9), that they might draw us into the misery in which they find themselves (Matt.

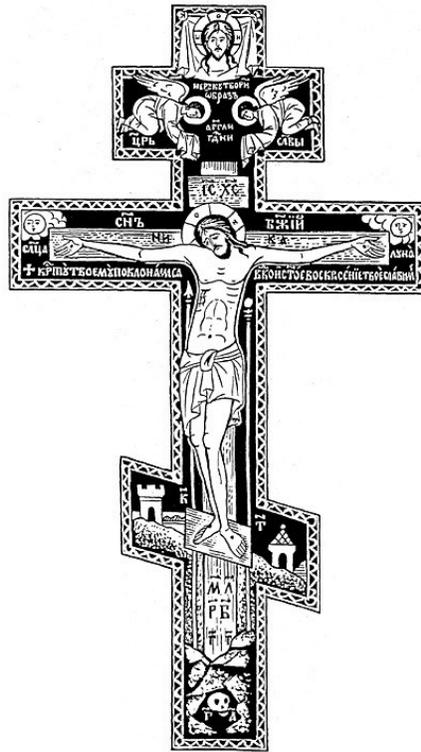
25:41), and for this reason they are called “devils” (John 8:44).

After the creation of bodiless spirits, God created the visible world from nothing by the power of His word “let there be.” The earth inhabited by us was created in six days. The last act of creation was man (Gen. 1:3-28), from whom came all nations that dwell upon the earth (Acts 17:26). God made the body of the first man, Adam, and breathed into him an immortal soul (Gen. 2:7) and then He made woman to be a helpmeet to Adam (Gen. 2:22). The first man being, by the grace of God, innocent and sinless (Eccl. 7:10) had the image and likeness of God (Gen. 1:26) with which he was endowed at the time of his creation, i.e., he possessed the power of clear and full reasoning (Gen. 2:20, 23), and the will inclined to do good (Eph. 4:24), so that his heart was enflamed with pure love towards the one God.

The primordial innocence and blessedness of the first parents ceased as soon as they were tempted by the devil, which entered into the serpent, and they ate the forbidden fruit (Gen. 2:16, 17); they have sinned by disobeying God and we inherit from them the bondage of corruption and death (Romans 8:21; 1 Corinthians 15:22; 2 Peter 1:4) and thus we “through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage” to the devil, (Hebrews 2:15) and we then find that we are all likewise sinners: for “as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned”: (Rom. 5:12), Evil thoughts and desires enter the mind and soul of man (Rom. 7:18-19) and every man feels the overbalance of wrong and sinful tendencies over the good and salutary desires; all mankind became “children of wrath” (Eph., 2:3); humanity was like a man suffering from an ailment from which he could not recover through his own efforts. No human being, even from among the most righteous, could have found the means sufficient, for even the righteous considered themselves sinful (I John 1:8); not even an angel could have restored man to his original status, or open the way to his eternal blessedness, because this required a Creative power, which Christ has for us (Eph. 2:10): “But God demonstrates his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” (Romans 5:8)

From the beginning of time God foresaw the helpless condition of the human race after the downfall of the first parents, and moved by His kindness and love, He preordained to grant unto man once again eternal blessedness (Eph. 1:4). For this purpose before the beginning of the world our Heavenly Father deigned to restore man to such a condition through which it would be possible for him to obtain eternal blessedness (John 3:6). The Only-begotten Son of God condescended to become man that He might sanctify us, “through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all”. (Heb. 10:1-12), “one sacrifice for sins for ever”; the Holy Spirit also deigned to come and sanctify and renew us through His grace (Titus 3:5).

In order that men may know at least in part the great benevolences preordained for the human race by the mercy of God, the Holy Spirit revealed to us and we believe that the second Person of the Divine Trinity, having taken upon Himself the work of redemption of man from sin and eternal death, is the Only-begotten Son of God (John 1:18, 3:16), and the Word of the Heavenly Father (John 1:1), begotten of the Father before all worlds, true God of true God, of one substance with the Father (John 10:30), through Whom all things were made (John 1:3).



From the beginning of the world, gradually, many times and in many ways God promised the coming in the flesh the Son of God into the world (Gen. 3 :15, 12:3, 26:4); the Prophets foretold not only the time of His appearance (Gen. 49:10), but also the signs by which He would be known (Isaiah 7:14, 11: 1-2,53:4-12, Micah 5:2, Zechariah 9:9). Finally, in the fulness of time the promises and prophecies of His coming were fulfilled, and we believe that the Only-begotten Son of God was conceived of the Holy Spirit (Luke 1 :35), and was born of the Virgin Mary (John 1:14) and was made man like unto us, but without sin (I Tim. 2:5, John 1 : 14), not ceasing for one moment to be God (John 1:18); He is therefore God-man, whose name upon the earth is Jesus Christ, in Whose person two natures – Divine and human – are united inseparably and unchangeably (Dogma of the 4th Ecumenical Council). Therefore, the Ever-Virgin Mother of Jesus Christ is truly the Mother of God (Isaiah 7:14, Luke 1:35), without any comparison more pure than the cherubim and more glorious than the seraphim.

Together with this, we believe that the Lord our God Jesus Christ took upon Himself human nature with its human weaknesses,* although He manifested His Divinity by many wonderful miracles (Matt. 13:17,9:22,12:13, 14:19.21,25, Luke 7:14-15, John 5:8, 9:7, 11 :43-45). For our sakes He became poor (II Cor. 8:9), and during His earthly life He suffered want and was burdened (Luke 9:58). He was humiliated and persecuted (Matt. 12: 24, John 5:18). Finally, after He enlightened us with the true knowledge of God (John 1: 18), and revealed to us the will of our Heavenly Father (John 6:40); In order to “give Himself as a ransom for all” and “take away the sins of the world” (I Tim. 2:6, John 1:29), He was betrayed by His disciple to His enemies, suffered ridicule, scoffing, chastisement and the agony of the cross. He died and

* fatigue, hunger, thirst. (ed.)

was buried during the time of Pontius Pilate (Matt. 26: 47-75,27). Thus He blotted out the handwriting that was against us, nailing it to the Cross, and defeated the spiritual principalities and powers which were against us, (Col. 2:14-15); through His death he destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, (Hebrews 2:14).

Being bodily in the grave the soul of our Savior descended into Hades to liberate souls that have been awaiting His coming (1 Peter 3:18-20, Eph. 4:8-9). On the third day after He was buried, He rose from the grave by the power of His Divinity; and after His resurrection He appeared many times during the forty days to His disciples, continuing to teach them the mysteries of His Divine Kingdom (Acts 1:3).



Having completed our redemption, our Lord Jesus Christ, surrounded by His disciples, ascended with His body into heaven (Acts 1: 9), and sat at the right hand of the Heavenly

Father (Mark 16: 19), i.e., He reclaimed in His humanity all powers in heaven and on earth (Matt. 28:18), for the prosperity of His Kingdom of Grace founded by Him on earth – His Holy Church (I Cor. 15 :25). Throughout all the changes in the turbulent world our Savior protects His Church by His Providence from all hidden and open enemies, from attacks and persecutions by those who wish to destroy her, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against her (Matt. 16: 18); for the uninterrupted continuation of His Church the Savior is everlastingly present with her according to His promise (Matt. 28:29), and by the Holy Spirit ordains pastors and teachers (John 16:13) to teach the word of His truth. For this reason the Church can never deviate from the faith, nor sin against her truth, nor fall into heresy. Therefore, on the basis of the teaching of the Holy Apostles, we confess that our Lord Jesus Christ is the only Chief. Pastor (I Peter 5:4), the only Mediator between God and man (I Tim. 2:5), the only High-Priest separate from sinners (Heb. 7 :26), the only Head of His Mystical Body–the holy Church (Eph. 1 :22.23); the only King of His Kingdom of Grace (Luke 1 :33, 1 Cor. 15 :25); because the Church is the exclusive Kingdom of God upon the earth (Mark 1:15, 1 Peter 2:9), and Jesus Christ is God (John 14: 11). The Kingdom of Christ will continue upon earth to the end of the world (I Cor. 15:25). Then our Lord Jesus Christ will come in His glory, with all the holy angels (Matt. 25 :31) to judge all people, living and dead (John 5 :29); after this will come the Kingdom of the glory and the blessedness of which there will be no end (Luke 1:33).

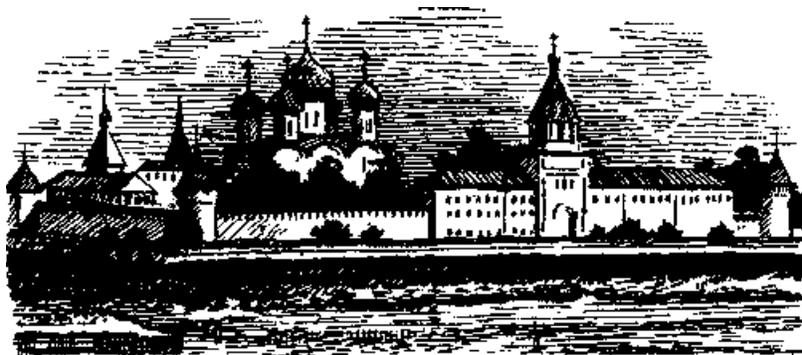
We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord Giver of life, Who proceeds from the Father before all times (John 15 :26), and we also confess that the Holy Spirit is true God, (Acts 5 :3-4) of one substance with the Father and the Son (I Cor. 2:11, Gal. 4:6), worshiped and glorified together with the Father and the Son (Matt. 28:19); the Holy Spirit spoke through the Prophets and Apostles (II Peter 1 :21), the Holy Spirit through the mediation and through the work of our Lord Jesus Christ, by the power of His grace mystically brings us to repentance (Ps. 58:11), helps us in our infirmities (Rom. 8:26), cleanses us from sin and sanctifies us by means of the Sacraments of the Holy Church (Titus 3 :5-6), seals upon our hearts the assurance of being the children of God (Rom. 8:16), and leads to salvation every man who believes truly and rightfully.

We believe in one, Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. We confess that she is One, because all true believers in Christ, in whatever time or place they have lived, form one spiritual body (Eph. 4:4-6), which, like the mystical body of Christ (Col. 1 :24) has one Head – Christ the Savior (Eph. 1 :22), and is animated by the Holy Spirit. We believe that the Church is Holy, because she was sanctified by the teaching, suffering and the blood of Jesus Christ (Eph. 5 :25-27) and is continually being sanctified by prayers and the Grace-giving Sacraments of the New Testament. We acknowledge that the Church is Catholic or universal, because she is not limited by any place, nor time nor race (Col. 1: 5-6); but includes all true believers from all places and times and all races (Gal. 3:9, 28). The Church is called Apostolic and Orthodox or true-believing because, although as a building of God she cannot have any other foundation besides Jesus Christ (I Cor. 3: 10-11), she rests upon the teachings of all the Apostles and Prophets, which teaching the Church preaches unchanged and in the same meaning and interpretation (Eph. 2: 19-21), preserving at the same time from the Apostles themselves

uninterrupted succession of the gifts of the Holy Spirit through the sacred ordination of her pastors and teachers (Acts 14:13).

Also we acknowledge that it is the duty of our conscience to obey the teaching, administration, laws, and guidance of the Church, because in relation to the pastors of the Church, the Savior said: He that hears you hears Me; and he that despises you despises Me; and he that despises Me despises Him that sent Me (Luke 10:16); and who disobeys the Holy Church becomes as a heathen or a sinner (Matt. 18:17).

We believe in the Communion of Saints. In our needs and in repentance we turn to the Saints who have pleased God with their lives, because they are closer to God and through their mediatory prayers they cleanse, strengthen and bring to God the prayers of the faithful (Rev. 8:3-4). We commit to the mercy of God the souls of those who died in faith, and have not brought forth fruits worthy of repentance (II Mac. 12:45), hoping that the prayers said for them will help in the attainment of blessedness at the time of resurrection, especially prayers united with the offering of the bloodless sacrifice of the Holy Eucharist, and also good works performed in faith in their memory (John 14:13).

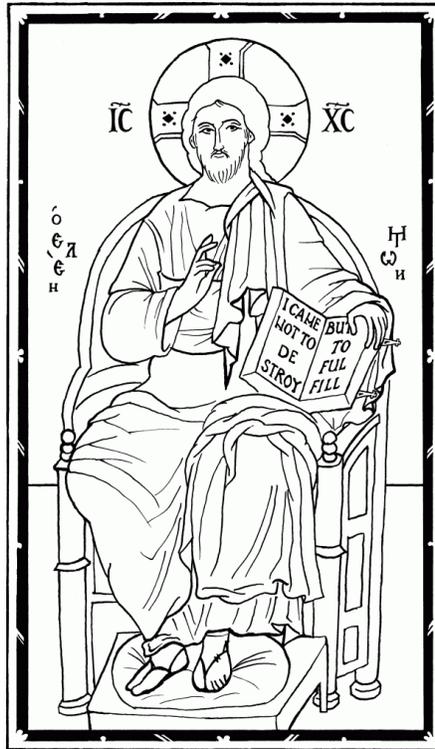


We acknowledge and accept also the Sacraments of the Holy Church, believing that through Holy Baptism we are regenerated by the Holy Spirit into a spiritual and sanctified life (John 3:5), becoming partakers of the grace of the Gospel (Mark 16:16). We acknowledge only one Baptism (Eph. 4:4), because there is only one natural birth, and so there can be only one spiritual birth. In the Sacrament of Chrismation (Confirmation) we receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit which nurture and strengthen us in our spiritual life (II Corinthians 1:21-22). In Holy Communion, under the form of bread and wine, we receive the true Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ for everlasting life (John 6:58). In the Sacrament of Penance (Confession) by asking forgiveness for sins confessed before a priest, we are absolved from those sins by Jesus Christ Himself (Matt. 18:18). In the Sacrament of Holy Orders the Holy Spirit ordains pastors through the putting on of hands of the bishop and empowers those who are properly selected to perform the Sacraments and to minister to the flock of Christ (Acts 20:28). In the Sacrament of Matrimony heavenly blessing is bestowed upon the groom and bride for their lawful union as man and wife (Eph. 5:31-32), and supplication is made for grace to have a Christian family. In the Sacrament of Anointing with Oil, through the

anointing with holy oil the sick receive the grace of God for the healing of physical and spiritual ailments (James 5:14-15).

Finally, through our faith in Jesus Christ we await the resurrection of the dead which at the time appointed of God will come at the end of this age and will become actual by the Almighty power of God, when all bodies of the dead will become alive, and become spiritual bodies, incorruptible and indestructible (I Cor. 15:35-37), and all will stand before the judgment seat of Christ (Matt. 25:32) “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he has done, whether it be good or bad.” (II Cor. 5: 10, *also* Romans 2: 5-6). We have good hope in God’s promise, that for those who believe “bring forth fruits worthy of repentance” and faith (Luke 3:8) , who love God and do good in this earthly life there will be a life of such blessedness (Matt. 13: 43) which we at the present time cannot imagine (1 Cor. 15 :49); and the unbelievers and unrepentent sinners will be thrown into everlasting fire and everlasting suffering (Matt. 25:41-42).

This we have been taught by the Eternal Truth Itself, Christ our Savior; such faith we have received from the Holy Apostles; this, and nothing else, was taught by our fore-fathers and this was confirmed by the Ecumenical and Local Councils and by the Teachers (the Holy Fathers) of the Church. Such teaching is kept by our Orthodox Catholic Church; for this faith the holy martyrs shed their blood and preferred death to the present life. Therefore, whoever remains firm and unshaken in this faith until death, witnessing and confirming his faith with good deeds, so that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate him from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 8:38.39), he undoubtedly will receive eternal salvation.



A Prayer on the Life of Christ applied to the Believer, by St. Simeon Metaphrastes

O only pure and incorruptible Lord, because of the unspeakable mercy of Thy love for mankind, Thou didst take to Thyself our entire human composition from the pure blood of the Virgin who gave birth to Thee beyond nature, by the descent of the Holy Spirit and the good-will of the ever-existing Father.

O Christ Jesus, Wisdom of God and Peace and Power, through the human nature which Thou didst take to Thyself, Thou didst suffer the life-giving and saving passion: the cross, the nails, the spear, death itself. Put to death in me the soul-destroying passions of the body.

Through Thy burial Thou didst capture the kingdom of death. Bury in me the evil devices of the devil with good thoughts, and destroy the spirits of evil.

Through Thy life-bringing resurrection Thou didst raise up the first father who had fallen. Raise me up who am sunk down in sin and give me the image of repentance.

Through Thy glorious ascension Thou didst make the flesh which Thou didst assume to be divine, and placed it on the throne at the Father's right hand. Grant me to receive a place at the right hand with the saved through communion of Thy holy mysteries.

Through the coming of Thy Spirit, the Comforter, Thou didst make Thy consecrated disciples to be honorable vessels. Show me also to be the receptacle of His coming.

Thou hast promised to come again to judge the world in righteousness. Grant that I may go to meet Thee in the clouds, my judge and creator, with all Thy saints; that I may glorify and praise Thee without end, together with Thy Father who is without beginning, and Thy most holy and good and life-creating Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Afterword

Dear reader – this short text will help anyone understand the Christian Faith in its saving power and splendor, which has been handed down in our Church from the Holy Apostles to our day. It will also help to orient one’s reading of the Holy Scriptures. We have found that though brief, it is packed with insight and illumination, and will repay careful and prayerful reading.

This text was translated from Russian by the Very Reverend Archpriest John Kivko and subsequently approved by Metropolitan Leonty of thrice-Blessed memory, and printed by the Metropolitan Council Publications Committee of the “Metropolia” (later to become the OCA). The original blessing was given in 1956. We have taken the opportunity to update the text of the Creed, expand the quotations from Holy Scripture and remove some less familiar technical terminology, replacing them most often simply with the words of Scripture. In a couple of sections the expansions and editing have been substantial, and while we believe that the increase in understanding justifies this, we caution the reader that the text no longer remains purely Abp. Antoly’s work nor Fr John Kivko’s translation. We hope to expand it still further to incorporate most if not of all of the scriptural texts that are referenced.

Preface to the Original translation

Anatoly (Martinovsky), Archbishop of Mogilev (died in 1860) was very much concerned about the religious welfare of the people of his day, particularly the youth, not only of his own diocese but of the entire nation.

In the preface of his book “FAITH, HOPE, CHARITY, Expressed in Sermons and Meditations” Archbishop Anatoly describes the religious situation of his day which differs very little from that of our day a hundred years later. “Lack of religious training in education, complaints about not being able to understand the liturgical language resulted in having educated people who cannot see anything beyond their material needs, not having any purpose in life, considering themselves members of the Orthodox Church and being ignorant of her teachings, rules of discipline, obligations and their relationship to the Church which gave them spiritual birth in Holy Baptism. When, at last, their hopes are shattered, health and wealth spent, when loneliness and sorrows come, the soul is empty, then they turn to religious books and eagerly grasp false teachings because they feel spiritual hunger.”

The salutary teaching of the Orthodox Church comes to us in its original purity as it was preached by the Holy Apostles, interpreted in the writings of the Holy Fathers, confirmed by the Ecumenical Councils and preserved unchanged by the entire Universal Church during the first eight centuries of the Christian era.

This teaching is explained by Archbishop Anatoly in the interpretation of the Nicene Creed.- J.K.

Re-edited and reprinted at St Innocent Orthodox Church, Tarzana, CA
stinnocenttarzana.org