

Some Basic Teachings Found in the Creed: their Salvific and Existential Significance

*Dr Philip Kariatlis
Lecturer in Theology*

The Creed – or more precisely, the Nicene Constantinopolitan Creed – which we repeat every Sunday at the Divine Liturgy, and at Baptisms or even during our own personal prayer was never intended as a text to be studied only by the so-called specialist theologians concerned more with the history of theology. Even though it was formulated some 1700 years ago it is still relevant for our life today. Unfortunately, however, whilst the Creed is often recited – and even at times from memory by some – it is nevertheless little understood and its significance rarely appreciated. The ‘creed’, coming from the Latin *credo* which means ‘I believe’ is essentially a text outlining the Church’s most important beliefs or doctrines; it is something which the Church holds to be true and therefore enjoins its members to believe in as well. Yet, more than a simple ‘acceptance’ of certain beliefs regarding the existence of God, the Creed discloses a faith in God that we, as believers, are called to hold fast to, to entrust ourselves to and to make a commitment to these saving truths. To the extent that the Creed gives witness to the way that God has revealed himself – as Father, Son and Holy Spirit – the faithful are called to place their trust in, and ultimately surrender to, this loving reality; indeed, a loving way of life which is beyond imagination, beyond boundaries and ultimately salvific. Moreover, and most importantly, the truths revealed in the Creed, relating to the Trinitarian God, to which we are called to entrust ourselves, are relevant and can underpin the way we live our life on a daily basis.

Statement, Summary and Standard of Faith

When the Creed was first formulated in the fourth century (to be precise in 325AD and 381AD respectively at what came to be known as the First and Second Ecumenical Councils), it was considered to be a *public statement of faith* confessed by the faithful as a sign of their unity in, and allegiance to, the true faith. Indeed, as a statement of faith, it precisely gave witness to those teachings that the faithful had personally accepted to be true, and as such made plain to which ecclesial community they belonged. Secondly, the Creed was also considered to be a *summary of faith* containing the most fundamental doctrinal tenets of the Christian Church in a brief and concise way. In claiming to encapsulate the essentials of the faith in summary form, the Creed was seen to contain those beliefs which were considered to be indispensable for a person's salvation. Far from being theoretical speculations about the faith, the Creed was written as a genuine testimony and confession of the Church's encounter with the true and living God. In this way, its teachings were seen to be relevant not only for salvation but also for the day to day life of Christians. As a formally recognized statement and summary of faith, the Creed slowly began to enjoy a kind of authority becoming a sort of benchmark by which true beliefs could be distinguished from false beliefs. In this way, it soon also became a *standard of faith* by which the faithful could evaluate the extent to which their personal faith was in fact the true faith of the Church. The Creed continues, to this day, to be a salvific statement, summary and standard of faith for the Eastern Orthodox Church and as such a definitive and classic expression of the Church's faith. Before presenting some of the most basic truths contained in the Creed, it is important to highlight its inner coherency; it is to this that we now briefly turn.

Inner Coherency of the Creed

It is very important to appreciate the inner coherency of the text of the Creed as a whole. Very often the Creed is read simply as a list of disparate doctrines disassociated from each other. So it is often understood, for example, to say something about the Father which then moves on to say

something about the Son [Christology] followed by the Church's teaching on the Holy Spirit [Pneumatology] and finally ending up with something about the Church [ecclesiology] being 'one, holy, catholic and apostolic'. The Creed also makes references to God's kingdom [eschatology] and our initiation into this radically new life of God through baptism (and by implication through our participation in the Eucharist and indeed in all the sacraments of the Church) [sacramental theology]. Incidentally, it would not be difficult at all to develop a rather comprehensive 'Dogmatics manual' based on the Nicene Creed. That which needs to be underlined, however, is that all the doctrines that we encounter in the Creed are intimately related to each other; each doctrine naturally flows out of the preceding doctrine. Indeed, systematic theology, which very often in Orthodox circles is looked upon with suspicion – claiming that it is a Western innovation and that Orthodox theology is more mystical than it is systematic – is precisely concerned with placing doctrines side-by-side and seeing their inner connection. Etymologically speaking, the word 'systematic' is derived from the Greek conjunction, 'σύν' meaning 'together' and the verb 'ἵστημι' meaning 'I stand'. In this way, systematic theology is concerned with standing doctrines side by side in order to be able to discern their unity and inner coherency.

With regards to the inner coherency of the text of the Creed, one example will suffice to make the point. After our proclamation of faith in the Father, the Son and finally the Holy Spirit, there is the article of faith dealing with the Church. Failure to see this reference to the Church as being inextricably linked with what precedes it would be to miss entirely the main point of the Creed. The creedal text, as a whole, is intimately connected and we must see how every statement flows 'naturally', as it were, out of the preceding one. In placing the article of faith in the Church immediately after its presentation of God, the Creed is underlining a fundamental tenet or doctrine of the Church; namely, that the Church ought to be seen in its most intimate connection with God and more specifically, in the case of the Creed, with the Holy Spirit [leading the

faithful to the Son and the Son to the Father]. Consequently, the Creed is identifying a fundamental ecclesiological claim within the Eastern Orthodox tradition that the Church is essentially nothing other than the miraculous presence of God here on earth today; a communion by grace between God and the world and not a mere human gathering devoid of the presence of God. In other words, in connecting the church with the Holy Trinity, the Creed is highlighting the fact that the church is a gathering where God is the one responsible for ‘calling’ the community together and where God is also present and acting within the gathering of faithful believers.

Even though, today, one may easily fail to see this important connection between God and the Church, for the fathers of the early Church this was self-evident. And so, for example, St Ireneus of Lyons (d. ca. 202AD) wrote: “where the Spirit is there is the Church. Where the Church is there is the Holy Spirit.” Seeing and appreciating this connection, we come to see, for example, that the church is nothing other than the very locus of the action and presence of the Spirit – and indeed the Father and the Son – in the world. In this way, the Creed presents the true nature of the Church as a gathering of people in which God can truly be experienced. In light of the prevailing confusion with regards to the Church today, an appreciation of the inner coherency of the text can demonstrate a foundational truth of the Church and explain why such an ecclesiological article of faith is placed in the text of the Creed. Having looked briefly at the significance and inner coherency of the Creed, our attention is now turned towards focusing on some of the basic teachings found in the Creed.

The Structure and Basic Teachings of the Creed

The Creed is made up of twelve articles of faith, seven of which relate to God the Father, his only-begotten Son, the ‘one Lord Jesus Christ’ and the Son’s relationship with the world. These articles were first promulgated at the First Ecumenical Council (325AD) in Nicaea. The remaining five, relating to the Holy Spirit – more precisely, the Holy Spirit’s divinity and unique relationship to the Father – the Church and God’s future kingdom,

were proclaimed at the Second Ecumenical Council (381AD) in the city of Constantinople.

God the Father almighty

The Creed begins with a confession of faith in God the Father. From this it is clear that the Christian understanding of God is totally unrelated to any philosophical understanding which usually presents God as some abstract concept, the Uncaused Cause of the Greek philosophers. The Christian God, on the other hand, is Father! He is Father because He eternally begets a Son and timelessly issues forth the Holy Spirit. In referring to God as Father, the Eastern Orthodox tradition claims that He is the sole principle (μόνη ἄρχη) of the Son's timeless generation and the Holy Spirit's procession. More than this, the fact that God is Father also implies that we are his children. Reference to God as the 'almighty' Father highlights that evil will not prevail in the end; that, on the contrary God's unimaginable love for the world will ultimately be victorious, thus giving us, the faithful, hope beyond the challenges, difficulties and evil that often seems to have the upper hand.

Furthermore, God is presented as Creator of both the visible and heavenly realms. This was added because there were many Christian sects in the early Church, such as the Gnostics for example, who believed that God could not have possibly been responsible for creating the world. In stating that God is Creator of 'heaven and earth', the Creed is declaring that God is responsible for bringing the entire created realm – both earthly and heavenly – into existence and as such highlighting its inherent goodness. Precisely because God is the Creator of the entire world, the world is sacred insofar as it reveals the glory of God (cf. Psalm 19:1). As such, far from exploiting the world and depleting its resources, human persons are charged with the responsibility of being faithful stewards of the world, caring and looking after it.

The Only-Begotten Son of God

Next, the Creed turns its attention to the ‘only begotten Son of God’. In light of the fact that the Christian God is the ‘Father almighty’, this necessarily implies that He has a Son because one cannot be called ‘Father’ without a Son. In this way, the logical sequence and relation between the articles of faith dealing with the Father and those following, namely the Creed’s presentation of the Son respectively become apparent. More specifically, those tenets of the faith relating to Jesus Christ, “the only-begotten Son of God” can be divided into two: whilst the first specifically relate to Christ’s unique relationship to his heavenly Father – what could possibly be called ‘ontological Christology’ (namely, the very being of the Son being precisely the same as the Father’s) – the second relate to Jesus’ relation to the world – what could be referred to as ‘functional Christology’. Notwithstanding the technical names ascribed to these two Christological sections of the Creed, it is important to appreciate what is being said.

The two most important phrases, which make explicit Jesus Christ’s unique relationship to the Father are the terms ‘of one essence [ὁμοούσιον]’ and ‘begotten [γεννηθέντα]’. In referring to Jesus Christ as being ‘of one essence with the Father’ the Creed is basically affirming the full and absolute deity of Jesus Christ and his co-eternity with the Father. In this way, the Creed is underscoring that all properties and activities proper to God the Father can equally be attributed to the Son of God as well. Accordingly, if God the Father is contemplated as ‘light’, then the same can be said of Jesus Christ; if God the Father is ‘true God’, so is Jesus Christ. This is the meaning of the phrase, “light from light, true God from true God” that we find in the Creed. To say this another way, the term *homoousios* underscores the fact that Jesus Christ cannot in any way be considered to be radically different from the Father. In other words, it highlights the fact that the Son of God possesses essentially the very same divinity as that of God the Father. In this way, the term affirms that the Son of God is unlike any created reality; namely, Jesus is not to be thought

of as an offspring or a creature of God – as indeed some were asserting during that time when the Creed was first written and continue to do so today! The other important term, ‘begotten’ gives prominence to the fact that not only is the Son of God of the very same essence as God his Father, but that He is also a distinct divine ‘hypostasis’ or person – indeed, the second divine Person of the Holy Trinity, yet one in permanent communion/*koinonia* with his Father – and of course the Holy Spirit. In referring to the Son of God as ‘begotten’ the Creed identifies that which is unique with regards to the Son of God. Indeed, the Father is the unbegotten One and the Holy Spirit is the One who proceeds eternally from the Father. In this way, both the indissoluble communion and the unity of the Father with the Son together with his distinctiveness is highlighted in the Creed.

After having specified the Son’s unique relationship to God the Father, the Creed continues in identifying his activity within the world. The Creed captures the entire activity of Christ on earth – namely, his incarnation, together with his crucifixion, resurrection, ascension and return in glory (often referred to in text books in terms of ‘Christ’s entire salvific economy’) – and provides us with the hermeneutical key to unlocking the significance of these activities as a whole and appreciating their relationship. This section of the Creed begins with “for us and for our salvation” thereby clearly highlighting that all these events can only truly be understood when seen in light of our salvation. In this way, the Creed is clearly concerned with presenting a truly comprehensive or unified treatment of soteriology (the technical term given in systematic theology for the Church’s doctrine of salvation) where all the events of Christ’s life are presented as integral aspects of salvation. Unlike modern approaches in theology which have tended to isolate one event – usually Christ’s atoning death on the Cross – for salvation, the Creed clearly presents with clarity and potency a more holistic and inclusive vision of salvation connecting and identifying the mutual relationship of Christ’s entire salvific economy. Accordingly, salvation is not merely achieved through Christ’s sacrifice on

the Cross, but includes his entire life, namely his incarnation, culminating in his resurrection and return in the future.

It could be said, even though this is not explicitly stated, that reference to the unique relationship of Jesus Christ to his Father followed by his relationship with us, is a precursor to the Christological teaching of the Church proclaimed at Chalcedon in 451AD – a definitive Christological statement for the Eastern Orthodox tradition – which stated that we believe in Jesus Christ who is one Person in two natures, perfect God and perfect human being. The Creed states explicitly that the Son, who shares the very same essence as the Father, became incarnate in time and in this way acquired an integral human nature. Accordingly, Jesus Christ is known as *one person in two natures without confusion and without separation*. The key to understanding Christ, in Orthodox theology, is indeed to see him from within this *theandric* (namely divine-human) perspective. And so, for example, even Christ's earthly ministry – which at first glance might be said to say something about Christ's humanity – also highlights his divinity as well, since all these earthly 'human' events took place in order to save humanity and the world at large, something only possible by one who is divine with exactly the same divinity as God, his heavenly Father. Consequently, these human events have no other purpose than to reveal his true divinity.

The Spirit of God, the Lord and Giver of Life

The Creed then turns its attention to the Holy Spirit, the third divine Person of the Trinitarian mystery. In the same way that the Creed defends the *divinity* of the Son, together with his *indissoluble unity* and *distinction* with the Father through the '*homoousion*' and the 'begotten' terms, so too does it insist the same with regards to the Spirit of God. In referring to the Spirit of God as 'Lord' and 'giver of life', the Creed unequivocally underlines the divinity of God's Spirit since, in the Scriptures, the title 'Lord' is specifically set aside for God. For example, in the Psalms we read: "God is Lord and he appeared unto us (Θεός Κύριος καί ἐπέφανεν

ἡμῖν), blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord” (Ps 118:27). Furthermore, in referring to the Spirit in terms of ‘giver of life’, the Creed again demonstrates the divinity of the Spirit – and indeed equality with the Father – in that the Scriptures clearly testify that only God can bestow the gift of life to humanity and the world more generally. Consequently, the Creed is explicit in its affirmation of the Spirit’s divinity.

The intimate fellowship and inseparable unity between the Spirit and the Father – and for that matter the Son of God – is also affirmed; it is seen in the phrase, “who together with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified.” The three Persons, precisely because they are divine, are worshipped and glorified together. Furthermore, even though distinct, they cannot be isolated since their unwavering love for each other is so ineffably and unimaginably great that no sooner do we reflect upon their ‘three-ness’, we are immediately led their unity.¹ Archbishop Stylianos has beautifully – indeed, poetically – characterized the fellowship between the three divine Persons as a “an ineffable and captivating reciprocal embrace of infinite love [ἕνα... ἄρρηκτο καὶ ἄλληκτο ἀλληλοεναγκαλιασμό ἀπείρου ἀγάπης].”² This incidentally also attests to the equal dignity and honour of the Spirit with that of the Father and indeed the Son.

Thirdly, the Creed’s reference to the Spirit as the one “who proceeds from the Father” highlights the Spirit’s own distinct and concrete personal existence as the third divine Person of the Holy Trinity. In the same way that the Creed mentions that the Son’s unique personal mode of existence is that He alone is *begotten* from the Father, so too does the Creed mention that the Spirit’s distinct mode of existence as a divine Person is that He alone eternally *proceeds* from the Father. In other words, whereas the Creed articulates the Son as the eternally begotten One, the Spirit alone is said to proceed eternally from the Father. Reference to the procession of

¹ St Gregory the Theologian described it in the following way: “No sooner do I conceive the unity than the Trinity bathes me in its splendour. And when I think of the Trinity, again the unity seizes me and my eyes are filled, and the greater part of what I am thinking escapes me.” *Oration*, 40. 41, PG 36:417.

² *Στό Περιθώριο τοῦ Διαλόγου* (Athens: Domos, 1991), 116

the Spirit is highly significant, therefore, in that it explicitly attests to the Spirit's unity and communion within the life of the Trinity yet at the same time its indivisible differentiation as a divine Person – indeed, as one of the three divine Persons of the Trinitarian mystery.

In teaching that the Holy Spirit proceeds eternally from the Father, the Eastern Orthodox tradition has rejected the Western teaching regarding the Spirit's procession also from the Son, known in theological text books as the *filioque* [Latin for 'and from the Son'], which teaches that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father *and from the Son*. The Eastern Orthodox tradition teaches that Holy Spirit *proceeds eternally* from the Father *alone* – that is, not from both the Father and the Son – whilst, He is *sent* into the world *in time*, by the Son. The teaching regarding the distinction between the *eternal procession* of the Holy Spirit from the Father alone, and his *temporal mission* from the Son, is clearly seen in the gospel according to St John, chapter 15, verse 26:

When the Advocate comes, whom I will send [ὄν ἐγὼ πέμψω] to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father [ὁ παρὰ τοῦ Πατρὸς ἐκπορεύεται], he will testify on my behalf.

The text clearly shows that the Holy Spirit *proceeds* from the Father – ὁ παρὰ τοῦ Πατρὸς ἐκπορεύεται – since the Father alone is the source and beginning of the Godhead. Indeed, the Eastern Orthodox tradition understands the verb 'ἐκπορεύεται' to have a special meaning signifying the Spirit's *eternal* procession from the Father alone. And so, when referring to the eternal procession of the Holy Spirit, which concerns the relations existing within the Trinity from all eternity [the immanent Trinity], the Church attributes the Spirit's procession and existence to the Father alone. It is for this reason that the Eastern Orthodox Church refuses to say that the Spirit also *proceeds* also from the Son, since this is not the Scriptural use of the verb 'ἐκπορεύεται', nor was it understood like this at the Second Ecumenical Council (381AD) which formulated the Church's teaching on the Holy Spirit. However, in referring to the Spirit's temporal

mission in the world, then it is clear that the Holy Spirit is in fact *sent* by Jesus Christ – ὃν ἐγὼ πέμψω.

Failure to distinguish between the two Scriptural verbs ‘ἐκπορεύεται’ and ‘πέμψω’, can consequently easily lead one to believe that the Holy Spirit ‘proceeds’ from the Father and the Son since the Scriptures mention the Son sending forth the Spirit – but this only concerns the Spirit’s temporal mission in the world.³ To do this, however, would not only introduce two separate principles or sources to the Godhead, which would amount to ditheism, but also distort the equality between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit;⁴ that is, an imbalance in the eternal relations is introduced in which the Holy Spirit would be subordinated to the Son. Consequently, in order to avoid introducing two principles into the doctrine of the Holy Trinity and destroying the equality between the three divine persons, the Eastern Orthodox Church rejects the *filioque*. In relation to the eternal relations between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the Eastern Orthodox tradition would claim that the Holy Spirit proceeds eternally from the Father and rests in the Son.⁵

³ St John of Damascus wrote: “Likewise, we believe also in one Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life: who proceeds from the Father, the Father being the only cause... proceeding from the Father and communicated through the Son. And participated in by all creation... And we speak likewise of the Holy Spirit as from the Father, and call him the Spirit of the Father. And we do not speak of the Spirit as from the Son... and we confess that He is manifested and imparted to us through the Son... But the Holy Spirit of the Father as proceeding from the Father, for there is no impulse without the Spirit. And we also speak of the Spirit of the Son, not as though proceeding from him, but proceeding through him from the Father. For the Father alone is the cause.” *Exposition of the Orthodox Faith* 1, 8,12. P.G. 94. 821-833 and 849.

⁴ The West responds to these objections by stating that the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son “as from one principle [*tanquam ab uno principio*]”. According to the Eastern Orthodox tradition, such a response reduces and confuses the persons of the Father and the Son, thus making the persons merely different aspects in which the one God appears; something which the East rejects, since it upholds that persons are concrete and unique modes of real existence. Furthermore, the *filioque* also ends up making the essence the principle of unity, and not the person of the Father, but the abstract essence of God. From this, there arises the danger of undermining the fact that God is personal, and believing instead that He is an abstract essence in which various relations can be distinguished. As we have shown, the East does not identify ‘person’ with mere relations as Thomas Aquinas (1224-1274AD) had done in the West by stating that *personae sunt ipsae relationes* [persons are the relations themselves]. Relations are *personal characteristics* of persons, but not the persons themselves.

⁵ For example, the Doxastikon of the Sunday of Pentecost Vespers clearly brings to light this Trinitarian aspect of the feast day: “Come all you people, let us worship the Godhead of three hypostases: the Son in the Father, with the Holy Spirit; for the Father timelessly begat the Son, who is co-eternal and of one throne; and the Holy Spirit was in the Father, glorified with the Son; one might, one essence, one Godhead, which we all worship saying: Holy God who created all things through the Son, with the cooperation of the Holy Spirit; holy Mighty, through whom we have known the Father, and through whom the Holy Spirit came into the world; holy Immortal, the comforting Spirit, who proceeds from the Father and rests in the Son. O holy Trinity, glory be to you.” This hymn is attributed to Emperor Leo VI (886-912AD).

The Salvific and Existential Significance of the Creed for Us Today

It is important to note that the truths depicted above are not some theoretical, speculative doctrines for the so-called ‘professional’ theologians devoid of any practical significance. On the contrary, these eternal truths are important both because they have to do with our salvation – namely, the means by which we too can enter into this fellowship between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit by grace. Furthermore, they are significant because they can inform, indeed *transform*, the way we live our life on a daily basis.

The significance of the Creed lies in the fact that it does not simply present theoretical truths about God but *saving* truths. The Creed captures in writing an experience of the early Church’s communion with God and thus it also allows the faithful today into that very same saving experience of the mystery of God. Far from being rigid, inflexible and merely authoritative teachings, the Creed, on the contrary, contains teachings which contribute to a person’s redemption and salvation. It is important to realize, right from the outset, that the Creed has nothing to do with simply adding to our knowledge of God, but its ultimate purpose is to give insights into another way of life, a life without end. Understood as salvific teachings bestowing upon the faithful a kind of foretaste, here and now, of that ‘not-yet’ direct experience where God will be revealed ‘face to face’ (1Cor 13:12), the Creed ought to be seen as one’s commencement upon the path of true life, which is, in the end, a path to freedom. Indeed, the type of freedom that God offers is one which liberates the world even from the bonds of death bestowing upon us the fullness of life. In this way, the truths contained in the Creed offer us salvation: salvation *from* death and salvation *into* eternal life where we literally become everything that God is by nature, by grace.

More than beings ‘*pointers to salvation*’, the teachings contained in the Creed also offer invaluable guidelines for how to live our life as Christians today. Far from being merely informative, the teachings contained in the Creed are ‘*pointers to life*’ which are able to make a *formative*, and in the

end, *transformative* impact on our life. Far too often, the doctrines of the Church in general, but more specifically also the teachings found in the Creed, are thought to be speculative abstractions which have nothing to do with life. Moreover, it is often said, that becoming familiar with the doctrines of the Church is of secondary importance, best left to the so-called expert ‘theologians’ since leading a ‘good’ and ‘virtuous’ life is what matters in the long run. On the contrary, however, doctrines in general, but more specifically those foundational ones contained in the Creed, are highly instructive for life. For example, the fact that we believe in one God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, uniquely distinct yet at the same time equal and united gives human persons, who are created in the image and likeness of God (Gen 1:26) a paradigm for true living.

In the same way, for example, that the three divine Persons continually embrace one another in an interpenetrating communion of love, completely and continuously open to the other, where their uniqueness does not destroy their unity and communion but rather constitute it, so too are human beings called to embrace the ‘uniqueness of others without this in any way necessarily leading to any division within a community of people. Based on this Trinitarian model, Orthodox theology would claim that difference, diversity and distinctiveness need not lead to separation; on the contrary diversity can be constitutive of unity within human societies. Trinitarian theology tells us that each of us was not created different *from* each other, but different *for* each other. In striving to live this truth alone, we would be able radically to transform the way we saw and interacted with others leading to a wonderfully diverse, yet peaceful and tolerant society.

Concluding Remarks

In attempting to explore some of the basic teachings found in the Creed, we were able to show that all these articles of faith are essentially related to the salvation of the world. In so doing, we were able to ascertain that the main tenets of faith as depicted in the Creed, far from being preoccupied

with any speculative or presumptive abstractions, are best understood from within a soteriological and existential framework. Specifically, we were able to show that the mystery of diversity in unity as lived eternally by the three divine Persons of the Holy Trinity, is a pattern of life that we are called to emulate, of course in a creaturely way. As such, it is not enough to become familiar with these truths but also and more appropriately to sing praises to the Trinitarian Godhead, to bow in awe before the incomprehensible mystery of divine Love, to be bathed by its splendor, and to pray to be gifted with the grace so openly flowing out of this Love, so that we may be enabled to live lovingly in this life, namely, selflessly orientated always towards the ‘other’, who ultimately is our ‘nearest god’.⁶

⁶ Archbishop Stylianos of Australia, in a poem entitled ‘The Other’ written in Perth, on 24-5-76. The entire poem reads: The Other/ The other is ineffable/ neither small nor large/ an anonymous yearning/ regardless/ of how familiar or distant/ he is my nearest god. / However different the other/ much more/ astonishing/ is my Lord and God/ only in touching him/ am I ecstatically redeemed/ in the fulfilment of the world.

Further Reading

- Alfeyev, Hilarion. *Orthodox Christianity: Doctrine and Teaching of the Orthodox Church*. Volume 2. Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2012.
- Carlton, Clark. *The Faith: Understanding Orthodox Christianity: An Orthodox Catechism*. Salisbury, MA: Regina Orthodox Press, 1997.
- Hopko, Thomas. *The Orthodox Faith: Doctrine*. Volume 1. New York: The Department of Religious Education, 1981.
- Meyendorff, John. *Byzantine Theology: Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes*. New York. Fordham University Press, 1974.
- Yannaras, Christos. *Elements of Faith. An Introduction to Orthodox Theology*. Translated by Keith Schram. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991.