

# N I C E N E C R E E D

## THE CHRISTIAN CREED OF FAITH "WE BELIEVE IN ONE GOD"

*Jesus was love in His teaching  
love in His action  
love in His suffering  
love also on the cross*

**Jesus Christ is the new man,  
standing beyond all piety,  
beyond all human possibility.**

*"Lord, I do not seek to understand  
that I may believe,  
but I believe that I may understand"*  
ANSELM

**ALBERT J. NORADUNKIAN  
HAI-CHRISDONIA**

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It is a rare phenomenon to have a layman with no formal theological education write a commentary on the Nicene Creed. The author, Albert Noradunkian, has been a jeweler but he prefers to be known as “Armenian Christian.” His pen has produced many booklets under the publishing name of “Ganteghalouys Publications.” As a recipient of these publications, I have constantly admired and respected the spiritual and biblical dimensions of his works.

Now we have a commentary on the Nicene Creed, known as the Nicaeno-Constantinopolitan Creed of 381 A.D. His commentary is a personal interpretation of the creed buttressed by his vast knowledge of the Church’s history. As expected his comments arise out of his despair in observing “Christian without Jesus Christ.” Therefore, in each segment of his exposition of the creedal statements, the underlying theme “*To believe and to love,*” those “radiant twin beams” surface and illuminate his commentaries. This is no academic enterprise. Each page bristles with remarks concerning the contemporary life of the Christian in this world. “Faith in God. . .” is not an intellectual exercise or a theological confession.” It is grace. . .from God.” Time and again one encounters the Gospel’s judgment on the way of life in the Western world.

The fact that he calls himself an “Armenian Christian” makes it obvious to the reader that the environment from which he comes is the condition of Armenian Christianity.

The Creed, for the author, is not a set of words to be repeated but a summary of a way life. Each segment of his commentary highlights, the various expressions, the underlying demand of love and unity. The Creed, therefore, is an expression of the Christian life which is to be proven by action (not in words).

The reader of the Commentary faces either a mirror of his own ugly self or as the Apostle Paul stated: “For it is the God who said,” ‘Let the light shine out of the darkness,’ who has shown in our hearts to give the light of knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.” 2 Cor. 4:6.

I conclude with deep gratitude to Albert Noradunkian, the “Armenian Christian” for providing us with this very personal and enriching testimony by his comments on the Nicene Creed.

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San Jose, California  
September, 2001

# THE CHRISTIAN CREED OF FAITH

## “WE BELIEVE IN ONE GOD”

Jesus was *love* in His teaching  
*love* in His action  
*love* in His suffering  
*love* also on the cross

The first ecumenical Nicene Assembly was held in 325 A.D. when 318 bishops gathered together to compile the profession of faith: “We believe in one God...” The Armenian church sent as a deputy St. Arisdages the Catholicos, who was the son of St. Gregory the Illuminator, the first Catholicos of the Armenian Church. The debate over the profession of faith became violent between the years 325 and 381 A.D. and resulted in considerable expansion in the meaning of philosophic words, and, finally, in the formation of the various provincial churches (Persian, Nestorian, Jacobite, Coptic, Ethiopian and Armenian).

During the bitter controversy between 325--381 A.D., Athanasius, the chief defender of the Orthodox view, was sent into exile four times and accused of using black magic and also of murder. When the Church of Rome finally, in the eleventh century, added the *filioque* phrase (which stated that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father **and the Son**) to the third article in the Creed, it created a permanent schism between the Church of Rome and the Greek Orthodox Church.

Many of these “ecumenical” assemblies took the liberty to add pagan beliefs (such as judging, anathematizing and excommunicating those who did not believe as themselves) to the Christian dogma. This was contrary to what Jesus had taught about love, pardon and forgiveness. For Jesus, faith was expressed in action. It was not a faith based on philosophy and words.

The first assembly of the apostles was held in Jerusalem under the presidency of James, the brother of Jesus. It was so beautiful and friendly that there has never been so graceful and ecumenical a gathering since that time. It is pitiful and sad to read in later church history that all of the ecumenical assemblies since the middle of the fourth century, have ended with dissension, envy and anathematizing of one faction by another.

Rome, with typical conservatism, continued to use the Creed without the *filioque* being written down until the start of the eleventh century. In 808 A.D., Pope Leo III wrote in a letter to Charlemagne that, although he himself believed the *filioque* to be doctrinally sound, yet he considered it a mistake to tamper with the wording of the Creed. The Creed is the common possession of the whole Church, and one part of the Church did not have the right to tamper with it.

Almost six hundred years after the Nicene Creed was developed, Cardinal Humbert and Bishop Candida arrived in Constantinople on Easter Sunday in 1054. They ascended to the altar of the Aya-Sofia Church and anathematized the Patriarch, Michael Serouliarios of Byzantine, and the Eastern Churches because they had not accepted the Latin Church’s addition of the *filioque*. The members of the established churches were petrified with fear and they converted to become worshipers of words

instead of worshipers of the true God. The Church of Jesus Christ had become the prey of greedy and ambitious people and envy and malice had driven out the spirit of love.

### **WE BELIEVE IN ONE GOD**

“To believe” means to give credence, to rely upon, to confide in, to put one’s trust in the almighty Creator whom we call “Our Father Who art in heaven”. Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury (1033-1109) has said, “I believe in order to understand.” C. S. Lewis said, “I believe in God like I believe in the sun, not just because I see it, but because by it I can see everything else”. Christians believe in God because, as human beings, we have been turned and tuned to Him. The author of Hebrews says ***Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. (Hebrews 11:1)***

Our belief in God is based on faith because He is inconceivable and intellectually imperceptible in His patience, love devotedness and in His Son’s sanctifying crucifixion. The corporal cannot understand the spiritual. Because of that God opened the door *through faith* for the salvation of humankind. The greatest fact which cannot be analyzed is human belief in the existence of God and in God’s Fatherhood toward humankind. The role of a Christian is to believe, suffer and wait!

To believe in Jesus Christ does not mean only to believe in Jesus’ historic existence, but to also obey and carry out all his commandments; to trust in his might and power; to depend on his wisdom and foresight and to trust in his promise even though we may suffer and be maltreated. To believe is to have the mastery of contemplation and meditation. To believe is to have the certainty and assurance in a Christian which makes him or her enthusiastic. The person believes that, after death, his or her earthly personality will rise from the grave.

“To believe” means to convince oneself, to consent willingly, and to trust in the Divine absolute authority. To believe means to trust in Divine tutelage, discipline and guidance. ***(Matthew 6:25-34; Luke 12:22-31)***

Belief in God opens boundless possibilities for humankind. It could be said of the unbelieving soul that it has never been a living soul. In a sense an atheist resembles an unborn fetus in a womb. As an unborn babe does not comprehend and is in a confused state of mind and darkness and has no personality, so also is an unbelieving person. So we can say that when an atheist dies, he or she has been aborted or that this individual died before he or she was born.

First-century Christians lived under the guiding light of Jesus and their lives influenced all those who were around them. Christianity was more than just word of mouth. It was a fact and a living example. It was neither speech nor creed. A Christian’s whole life became a service and a self-sacrificing way of life. The Apostolic Church grew freely and independently. The Church did not need a creed or a constitution until pagan doctrines infiltrated it. The believing Christian had to be joined to one belief together with all the believers who shared similar beliefs in God. We are obliged to believe those who also believe. In the Gospel, the apostle,

Saint John, emphasizes “believing” rather than “belief”. “Belief” can just be “knowledge”. “To believe” is a verb involving performance and execution. It is not a recitation of a list of truths, but rather a belief in Jesus Christ. In turn, the testimony of the apostles became credible and believable to others because **they** believed.

The present civilization has its own unnatural and nominal Christians. They are Christians without Jesus Christ. These people act as churchmen without consciousness of their sacrament. They attend church as if it were a show. The first sign of believing is to pray. Today people worship their gold, not their God. They speak about God like the money changers who count the dollars in their fingertips. They speak about God while extorting the poor. They do not attend church, but they defend the institution. They glorify God, but they do not believe in Him.

They have the need of faith that God exists, but also they have the need of faith that He does not exist! If people do not have positive faith, their faith is blunt, perverted, negative and degenerate. Experienced and positive faith is not contrary to reason. It even surpasses rationalism. The power of believing is not in *belief* itself, but in having the freedom *not to believe*.

I would like to remind my brothers and sisters in Christ, that our Lord, when speaking about the need of faith, stressed the importance of **love** to his disciples. It is sad to watch Christians reciting the Nicene Creed together but having of feeling indifference to each other. Our Lord Jesus, while teaching his disciples about faith, stressed and commanded them to love one another. On the lips of Jesus Christ, the words “believe” and “love” were always used equally and alike. Is it possible that the bishops in the fourth century did not love each other and were envious of one another? Why don’t we find a single word about love or loving in the Nicene Creed? Was it forgetfulness, neglect or oversight on the part of the bishops? Jesus Christ commanded us saying, ***“I give you a new commandment, that you should love one another, just as I have loved you, so you too should love one another.”***

***By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another. (John 13:35)***

## **THE FATHER ALL-SOVEREIGN**

There has only been one single religion in this vast world that has worshiped God by calling Him “Father”. Only Jesus, the Son of God revealed God as a loving Father to humankind. The God of the Gospels is our Heavenly Father. Human beings learn about fatherhood in the home. God is not a fearsome dictator, a cruel and unmerciful Creator or a pitiless Judge. God is a loving, merciful, compassionate and tender Father. Jesus came to dispel and dissipate fear from the hearts of men and women and to present God majestically, as the heavenly Father of all humankind.

Jesus revealed God’s fatherhood and guardianship of all creation by saying that God was concerned even with the sparrows of the air. As humans, we should not only believe in God’s Fatherhood, but we should also show obedience and submission to God. For the Jews, God was the Father of the Sealed Law. God is the First Cause, author, incentive and source of

understanding. There is no other being and cannot be another being who can be fatherly and compassionate like God, the Creator. Jesus Christ came to earth to transform the “fear of God” into “love of God” by saying “**Fear not**”. Until humanity changes its fixation, men and women will think of God as a violent tyrant instead of as an overwhelmingly loving Father.

### **MAKER OF HEAVEN AND EARTH**

The inseparable tie between the Creator and creature is the relationship between God and the earthly creatures made in the image of their creator. Human transformation into Godliness will be accomplished because that supreme attribute was a gift from the Creator. Rational humans have searched for their Creator and have not found peace and comfort away from God. God manifests Himself to people as “**I am what I am**”. God “IS”. He was not made or created by anyone, as opposed to all the idols which are man-made creations. Every deity has a maker except God. God is the First Cause, the Light, the Life and the Giver in the whole cosmos, in which is incorporated every reality and being. There is no God in Buddhism, no supernatural power or creator and the concept of a savior does not exist. Behind the facts and effects, there is no protoplasm, but there is God, the Creator and His fingerprint.

The person who cannot recognize the marvelous Creator in our resplendent universe does not have diminished faith. It is their judgment which is lacking. The incarnation of Jesus is that resplendent bridge, which joins the Creator to the creature. The Creator, with His deep voice speaks saying, “Peace be with you.” The oracle of the Kingdom of God is God’s Fatherhood, guardianship and regency to men and women. God is not only a Creator in past history, but also in the present. The Gospel of Jesus presents a God whose Presence is with us even today. If a person turns his or her eyes and looks at the beautiful universe and wonders without recognizing the Creator behind the universe, his or her rightful end will be in the cemetery! What is the difference between science and religion? One delivers food for the mind, and the other food for the spirit. Both are truth, but one tries to approach the unending secrets of creation, and the other tries to approach the Creator through whom one can understand the meaning of life and existence. Without God, life is meaningless vanity and self-conceit.

### **AND OF ALL THINGS VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE**

God, through the visible, reveals the invisible. Through visible writing, God’s spoken invisible commandments became visible. The spoken message of God to the prophets, which was invisible became visible and meaningful all the way to the twentieth century. Through twenty-six letters of the alphabet, the people of today can understand the civilization of the past. Those twenty-six magic letters coagulate the celestial and condense the ethereal. Through the magic letters, the spoken and the untouchable words become something which we can touch and feel. To believe and to love, are those radiant twin beams which sanctify humankind and make the invisible visible and give the mortal body the consciousness of the immortal existence of the Soul.

St. Paul said: ***We consider and look not to the things that are seen, but to the things that are unseen; for the things that are visible are temporal, but the things that are invisible are deathless and everlasting (2 Corinthians 4:18)***

***By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God so that what we see was not made out of things which are visible (Hebrews 11:3)***

God revealed Himself to mankind as breath, wind, voice and appearance. In the incarnation of His Son, Jesus, God became flesh. People in their mortal flesh could not see the Divine unless the Son of God was willing to become incarnate. Humanity, with its mortal knowledge, could not wholly penetrate and comprehend the divine spiritual revelation. The professional churches of today have departed from their spiritual mission to direct and guide believers to the transformed and sanctified holiness.

### **AND IN ONE LORD JESUS CHRIST**

We give God the name of “Lord” because He has **loved** us, but we call Him “God” because He **made** us. Where there is love, there is the Lord. Where there is no Lord, there is confusion. When the apostles were with Jesus, the term which they referred to him as “**Lord**”. But when Jesus ascended to heaven, the disciples used the title “**Jesus Christ is Lord**”. The messages of the Jewish prophets began with the words, “**Thus says the Lord**”. But Jesus Christ began by saying “**I say unto you...**”.

### **THE ONLY-BEGOTTEN SON OF GOD**

The above title, Son of God, was reserved only for Roman emperors. The first Caesar of Rome was named Divus Augustus and the previous emperor was Julius Caesar, or Divas Julius. Therefore, the successor to the throne, Tiberius, succeeded Caesar Augustus and was named *son of god* with a small “s”, not a capital “S”. Why does the divine self-revelation begin to be understood with Jesus Christ? It is because God, through His Son, humbled Himself, and became flesh. The incomprehensible became comprehensible and the invisible became visible to mankind. Therefore, we as Christians, know God only through the life of the Incarnate Jesus Christ. Humankind now can say the incomprehensible and conceive the ineffable because God has been manifested through Christ. Every time we try to explain God, our act becomes senseless babbling. Once there was a ‘golden age’. There was devotion, fervour, religion, holy priests and purity of heart. But now that ancient ‘age of gold’ has degenerated imperceptibly from gold to silver and from silver to wood and from wood to iron. Three hundred years ago, St Bernard of Clairvaux wished, before he died, to see the Church as it was in ancient days when the apostles cast their nets for souls, and not for gold and silver. Luther was a man of the people and he fought to bring the true religion back to the hearts and homes of the people. He wanted to show them that religion was not a clerical, ecclesiastical, ritual act performed in the church, but the appropriation of the Gospel into life. Religious people following St. Francis of Assisi or Thomas a Kempis or countless others of the medieval Church, still believed poverty to be part of the highest moral endeavour. The obligation and duty of a pastor was to

**know** God and to become acquainted with and understand Him in the life of Jesus Christ. We should ignore our ego and turn toward the life and the conduct of Jesus.

When we concentrate our contemplation on Jesus Christ, we do not meet a soft and gentle Jesus nor a babe at his mother's bosom. We meet a powerful personality who agitates and motivates us to dispel old prejudices from within and to rid ourselves of our personal idols, such as selfishness, envy and hypocrisy. We can either be attracted to this Jesus or we can oppose and resist him. We can follow him or turn away from him. The bible calls this Divine image of Jesus Christ "Holy" because Jesus does not resemble the gods of our selfish imaginations and the idols of our capricious fancy. The true God can be known only in the life and actions of the Incarnated Son of God, and not through our selfish and faulty imaginations.

### **BEGOTTEN OF THE FATHER BEFORE ALL THE AGES**

Christmas is the most wonderful festivity of Jesus' incomprehensible and mysterious incarnation. If we believe in the sacramental birth, why then do we spoil and degrade Christmas by mixing it with our worldly pleasures and benefits? If we do not believe in it, why celebrate the birth of Jesus? The sanctity of the birth of Jesus is the highest and most unsurpassable act of God. The festivity of the Divine Revelation of God is not about his coming into existence, but about his visiting, becoming flesh and leading men and women to the true God. Jesus is the only Begotten of the Father before all worlds. At Christmas we become witnesses of "***The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.***" (John 1:14)

Jesus Christ wants to dwell - to be born within - each one of us as He came down to dwell among humankind. He calls each one of us saying, "Follow Me". His motive for being born in us is to make each of us divine. Jesus was born and lived among people and he preached to thousands of people. We also have to live and work among people and not among a special class of our choice, but in the dark world so that we can enlighten those who are in the world, in humility and patience and, also, love the unlovable. The Incarnation of Jesus - his becoming flesh - has revolutionized humanity and the religious contemplative understanding of universal love.

### **LIGHT, OF LIGHT**

The birth of Jesus on earth opened the highway to God. The Light of Light descended from the bosom of the Father on the arms of angels. Jesus' birth in Bethlehem and His crucifixion on Golgotha is history and is not of interest to ordinary persons. However, the fact that he is the Saviour should interest every human being, because we will be granted eternal life if Jesus is born within us.

Jesus Christ was born when Augustus Caesar was reigning and he was crucified in the days of Tiberius. There were many diverse religions at that time. The different Caesars were accepted as gods and worshiped by the people. There were Greek gods and many holy shrines. There were also many Oriental mystical religions where immoral worship was acceptable.

Almost half the people of the world were slaves who were cruelly forced to work in the mines and armies. The Roman citizens, however, lived wastefully and were indifferent towards the misery of the slaves.

Very few people came to honour Jesus at his birth. The shepherds came from the fields and the Magi came from far away. Where were the Jewish Rabbis and intellectuals? Where were the doctors of religion? Where were the pedantic Pharisees? Only a very few, out of so many Jewish people, recognized the significance of his birth. In the Western world, today, we announce the good news with the slogan "Merry Christmas" which has no Christian connotation!

Today people celebrate Christmas for their own benefit, amusement and pleasure. The real message of Christmas is humility, goodness, pardon, toleration and endurance for each other. Today the soul of each Christian is a symbolic Bethlehem where the Son of God, the resurrected Jesus Christ, wants to be born. The celebration of the holy birth is the revelation of God within the hearts of humankind. Jesus was born only once in the flesh, but, spiritually, He will be born repeatedly in the hearts of those who believe and love him.

### **TRUE GOD, OF TRUE GOD**

It is not enough to just think of God as the mighty, immovable and unchangeable Creator. It is not enough to only meditate and speculate on God. It is also necessary and desirable to **know** Him through physical experience. God becomes an abstract and hypothetical God only through speculation. It is only possible to comprehend God as our heavenly Father through experimental friendship and companionship with Him. As Jesus said: ***This is eternal life: to know [to perceive, recognize, become acquainted with and understand] You, the only true and real God, and to know Him, Jesus Christ, the Anointed One, whom you have sent. (John 17:3)***

The immense, unbounded, all-seeing and all-present Being is the Lord God. His wisdom is inexplicable; His might unshakeable; His goodness inaccessible.

- 1. God is a Spirit. He cannot be measured, formed or fashioned. Neither can He be contained.**
- 2. The Absolute is not created. It is without beginning and unlimited by time.**
- 3. This perpetually bright Being is our God whom we worship. We depend on Him and trust Him. Through Him, we walk from mortality to eternal life.**
- 4. It is not possible to limit God with human understanding. He is above human comprehension. He is super-consciousness.**

In order to describe God, the writers of the Old Testament alienated Him from humankind. In the New Testament, Jesus, the incarnate Son of God, draws us nearer to a loving and merciful God and teaches us to know Him as the **Father**. It is not God who has alienated Himself from humanity and is, therefore, unapproachable, but it is we who have alienated ourselves from our Creator, like the man in the parable of the Prodigal Son.

God, who is a supernatural and super-sensitive Being, is not subject to

any limitations. Humanity has more urgency and need of God, than the earth and the planets need the sun.

Human intelligence and human will perceives above itself a hovering supernatural Light from a loving Personality who can produce truth, good and the lawful within us in an absolute and unlimited way. God, being the Creator of Light, still condescends and comes down among His creatures. The Son of God is an emanation of the inscrutable God who is without beginning. The Son, even after the Incarnation says, ***All things were entrusted and delivered to me by my Father; and no one fully knows and accurately understands the Son except the Father; and no one fully knows and accurately understands the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son deliberately wills to make him known. (Matthew 11:27)***

Faith in God is revelation. It is not an intellectual exercise or a theological study. It is grace (merit and favour) from God to all those who unselfishly are loyal to Him. Paul, the apostle, was not converted from his rabbinic faith to Christianity in the seminary of Rabbi Gamaliel. Paul went to a desert in Arabia to meet Jesus, who had appeared to him on the road to Damascus. Paul had a personal communion with Jesus for two years. Only afterward could he say, ***We preach Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God. (1 Corinthians 1:24)***

**BEGOTTEN, NOT MADE;  
OF ONE SUBSTANCE WITH THE FATHER**

***The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; We have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father (John 1:14)***

The birth of Jesus is inexplicable as it says: ***No one fully knows and accurately understands the Son.. and anyone to whom the Son deliberately wills to make Him known (Matthew 11:27)***

The mortal human should know the measure of his intellectual understanding and not try to oblige others to think the way he or she thinks.

While talking with Nicodemus, the theologian, Jesus said, ***If I have told you of things that happen right here on earth, and yet you do not believe me, how can you believe me if I tell you of heavenly things? (John 3:12)***

The majority of Christians busy themselves collecting information and explanations about God in the same way Western people like to pile up money, which they never will have the time to enjoy. The will of God for humanity is to love Him and to accomplish His commandments, rather than to busy themselves doing philosophical or academic exercises.

The happiness and joy of parents and children comes from being close to each other and enjoying each other's presence. After Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist, he went to a desert place to communicate with His Father and to confer and to receive further instructions and power. Sometimes, Jesus would pray all night, because He was in want of his Father's presence. Jesus said, ***So that they all may be one as You,***

***Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be one in us, so that the world may believe and be convinced that you have sent me. I made your name known to them and revealed your character and your very self, and I will continue to make it known, that the love which you have bestowed upon me may be in them [felt in their hearts] and that I may be in them. (John 17: 21, 26)***

The Incarnation of Christ is neither a philosophy nor a systematic theology or a thesis. The Incarnation of Jesus is a sacramental Presence standing among us and calling each one of us saying, ***Come to me all you who labour and are heavy laden and over burdened, and I will give you rest. (Matthew 11:28)***

Twentieth century Christians, similar to Athenian, Epicurean and Stoic philosophers, dispute the truths of the Gospel and the commandments of Jesus because they do not have the sweet relationship with Jesus and they are deprived of the experience of the resurrected and living Christ. Their only enjoyment is ***“to hear and to say something new.”***

Jesus Christ is not only a historical figure for believers. He is not a visiting professor of morality. He is not a teacher of a new philosophical theory. He leads mortal transients to spiritual reality and the dead to resurrection and eternal life. Thus, Jesus ceases to be a mere religious teacher and turns out, instead, to be the life-giving Saviour. Jesus, the Saviour, abides, but the teachers of philosophy and their ideas are transient. We respect intellectual philosophers and teachers, but we adore and worship God who sent Jesus, the Son. Jesus Christ has left an eternal shadow on the highway of human history. Because of His incarnate life, He has cast an enormously great shadow which can not be matched by any other person.

#### **THROUGH WHOM ALL THINGS WERE MADE**

***Jesus was, in the beginning, with God. All things came into being through Him, and without Him not one thing came into being. In Him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. He was in the world, and the world came into being through Him; yet the world did not know him. (John 1:2-3, 10)***

Jesus cannot be found in theology because he is not a philosophical or an intellectual hypothesis. He cannot be described outside of the Gospels. His true witnesses are his true and faithful apostles.

***It was in him that all things were created, in heaven and on earth, things seen and things unseen, whether thrones, dominions, rulers or authorities; all things were created and exist through him and in him and for him. And he himself existed before all things and in him all things consist. (Colossians 1:16-17)***

Jesus Christ is neither an education nor a concept, but through his life he manifested God, the incomprehensible.

#### **WHO FOR US MEN AND FOR OUR SALVATION CAME DOWN FROM THE HEAVENS, AND WAS MADE FLESH OF THE HOLY SPIRIT OF**

## THE VIRGIN MARY

Jesus Christ is not an icon of a deceased and departed saint. He is not an obelisk or a statue of a martyred hero. Instead, He is the Incarnate Son of God. Jesus did not commit himself to death by his crucifixion, but he was killed while fighting a duel with the Evil One and manifesting God's love and truth to humankind. This living fact shows his faithfulness to the divine mission. When we look at this heroic and self-sacrificing figure, we see a supernatural personality which drives out from within the hearts of men and women the evils and idols which have destroyed so many of the world's people. After his combat with evil, Jesus prayed to the Father about his objectives and purpose on earth and said: ***I have glorified you down here on earth by completing the work that you gave me to do... Sanctify them, purify, consecrate, separate them for yourself, make them holy by the truth. Your word is truth. (John 17:4, 17)***

Jesus Christ is not simply a unique and perfect person. Such a personality can be a grand philosopher. Socrates helped us to observe the resplendent height of the spiritual world and he reversed the moral code of his times. Moses condemned sin and other offenses. Buddha distinguished between good and evil. But neither Socrates, Moses or the Buddha could reveal the Absolute Spirituality which affected the words of Jesus, who is fact and life jointly. Jesus, the matchless, unequaled and perfect being was the Son of God. By finite rationality, we cannot explain the Absolute and with bounded volition we cannot capture perfection. He who is willing to represent goodness should carry it in his or her heart and soul.

## AND BECAME MAN

In the human Jesus, there was the beam of faith, the embodiment of hope, and the current of love. Jesus embodied two dimensions - divine and human. The incarnate birth of Jesus was a gift from God to humanity. How easy it is in our busy lives to forget and disregard the blessings of God, like the inn-keeper two thousand years ago. While we are celebrating the New Year and the Holy Birth, let us seek the true Light. Let us celebrate the Good tidings of the Divine Mystery which could enter the world of humankind and herald the coming of the Kingdom of God. The shepherds of Bethlehem entered a manger which had neither door nor doorkeeper. They entered freely because the doorkeeper was the heavenly incarnate Son of God, who says, ***Come to me all you who labour and are heavy-laden and over burdened, and I will give you rest .. I will ease and relieve and refresh your souls. (Mat. 11:29)***

Jesus is the Reflection of God's glory. He is the physical and visible Presence of God on earth.

Jesus is the door of the Kingdom.

Jesus is the fountain of solace and comfort.

Jesus is the True Physician.

Jesus is love in his doctrine.

Jesus was love in his activity.

Jesus was love in his suffering.

Jesus was love on the cross.

Jesus is the supreme reality for all ages.

**HE WAS CRUCIFIED FOR US.  
UNDER PONTIUS PILATE  
HE SUFFERED AND WAS BURIED,  
AND ROSE AGAIN ON THE THIRD DAY**

“The cross leads us from the visible realities to the invisible realities.”  
Athanasius of Alexandria (293 - 373). ***The message of the cross is sheer absurdity and folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. (Corinthians 1:18)***

The Roman centurion had a change of heart at the feet of Jesus and he became the first gentile Christian and martyr. Humility and submission is natural at the cross of Jesus among true believers, while idol worshippers would jeer and mock the Christians.

Jesus Christ lived near the cross and carried it, not only after his condemnation, but throughout his human incarnation. At the early dawn, when the first light of the sun began to chase away the darkness, human history paused and stopped a minute at the sight of an unprecedented tragedy which unfolded on the narrow pathways of Jerusalem. There, in the spiritual darkness of human hearts, the Nazarene Prophet carried a heavy cross, and slowly climbed the steps of a twisting pathway towards Golgotha. The sanctifying crucifixion reveals the participation of the Creator in the pain and sufferings of humanity. The crucified Saviour's blood trickled down from the cross, spread all over the earth and drafted the future course and conduct of the Holy Church.

To cross oneself; is a sign of praising and witnessing through which Christians comprehensively express the mysterious. John Chrisostom wrote in the fourth century, “When we cross ourselves, remember the significance and the cost of the cross which Christ paid for us.”

St. Cyril says, “We should not be ashamed to witness for the Crucified One. We should always cross ourselves boldly.”

St. Augustine said, “Believers should cross themselves as a mark of their salvation.”

Martin Luther did not want to abolish this tradition either, and some Lutheran and Anglican church members continue to cross themselves when they enter a church today.

Jewish religious fanatics thought that, by crucifying Jesus, the Nazarene, they could put an end to Jesus' enlightened religious teachings. They never dreamt that the cross on which Jesus was crucified would become the means of spreading the eternal life-giving Gospel. Those who crucify Jesus, today, are the people who amuse themselves with debauchery. The shameful crucifixion of Jesus was not an accidental event, but a wake-up call to humanity about responsibility. Peter explains in writing why Jesus died, ***He personally bore our sins in his own body on the tree that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. (1 Peter 2:24)***

In order to reach the glory of the risen Jesus, one must become a participant in his suffering and walk to the hill of Golgotha. Without sacrifice, there is no triumph and without the crucifixion, there is no

resurrection. Do we carry the holy cross of Jesus lovingly, or do we feel we are under an obligation? When the Greek hero carried the triumphant tidings of the Marathon to Athens, he fell down because of shortness of breath and died. Jesus carried His triumph to Golgotha and then he said "I conquered the world" and died. Without love, there is no triumph and without suffering, you cannot show your love. ***No one has greater love .. no one has shown stronger affection.. than to lay down his own life for his friends. (John 15;13)***

The title, "***Son of Man***", expresses the Incarnation of Jesus and his participation in the fate of human mortals. Ultimately, it was suffering and the crucifixion which would testify to mankind and bring humans to the truth. Six hundred years before Jesus, Isaiah prophesied and said, ***Who has believed what we have heard? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; He was despised and rejected by others; a man of suffering and acquainted with grief; Surely he has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases; He was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; He was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; For he was cut off from the land of the living. They made his grave with the wicked and his tomb with the rich. Out of his anguish he shall see light; yet he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors. (Isaiah 53)***

Jesus said, ***I assure you, most solemnly I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains by itself alone. But if it dies, it produces many others and yields a rich harvest. (John 12:24)***

Jesus spoke the above words in reference to himself. If he had not died for humankind, he would have been alone without the holy Church. Jesus died so that he would produce much fruit. The aforesaid is not a dogma or doctrine, but only a personal view. Since the second century, the Church fathers began to interpret the crucifixion of Jesus as a "ransom" paid to the devil. Irenius of Leon, Origen, Athanasius and Augustine were the chief defenders of this doctrine (Encyclopaedia of Religion by Vergilius Ferm - page 44 on the subject of "Atonement") The above doctrine belittles God and makes the devil a creditor. Therefore, I do not share these views. Jesus carried our cross to save us. We in turn should carry his torch to the four corners of the earth.

The triumph of the cross is the resurrection of Jesus Christ and his promise of eternal life. The cross is the key to understanding the life and the message of Jesus. The crucifixion of Jesus brought about the resurrection of the dead. Eternal life was born from the crucifixion. The crucifixion of the Incarnate Son of God became the salvation of Christians. We should remove the cross from metallic iron and gold jewelry and keep it in our hearts and minds to make it beneficial to our lives.

The Gospel message begins not at the birth of Jesus Christ, but at His triumphant resurrection. The magnificent resurrection of Jesus from the dead kicked away the dread of death from the hearts of all those who believe

and love Jesus Christ. Through his 'super miracle', Jesus appeared once again on the stage of human history to protect his flock of sheep from the wolves.

The fact of Jesus' resurrection was so much embodied in the mind and heart of Paul, the apostle, that he became the greatest champion and preacher of the resurrection of the dead. At the dawn of his Second Coming, the past and future will embrace each other with a shout of victorious joy and hands and hearts will join to begin building the kingdom of God on earth. St. Paul wrote the following letter of encouragement to the Philippian church:

***I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord. For His sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in Him; not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the Law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith. I want to know Christ and the power of His resurrection and the sharing of His sufferings by becoming like Him in His death, if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead. (Philippians 3: 8-11)***

Where are those Christian preachers, today, who are ready and willing to share the sufferings of Jesus with the founder of the Gospel truth? The pedantic scholars of the Seminar of Jesus have refused to believe in the bodily resurrection of Jesus. Jesus Christ, after His bodily resurrection, revealed himself to the unbelieving women, who loved him. The disciples, under the shadow of the cross, but in the blazing light of his resurrection, also saw their teacher. Do you want to see Jesus? It is possible only when you serve him, suffer for him and love him the way he loves you. It was the beautiful fact of the resurrection which obscured and eclipsed the pagan religions and transformed the psychosis of humanity.

The news of our Lord's resurrection rushed from city to city, from age to age, fortified the faith, revived the hope, and rekindled brotherly love. The hope of resurrection within the context of time, will become the eternal certainty of tomorrow. The celebration of the resurrection of our Lord stands as the zenith of glorious triumph and as inspiration to all believers. St. Paul, in one of his inspired moments, said, ***Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say there is no resurrection of the dead? If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation has been in vain and your faith has been in vain. We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified of God that He raised Christ. (1 Corinthians 15: 12-15)***

***But in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died. For since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead has also come through a human being; for as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ. (1 Corinthians 15: 20-23)***

The uppermost significance of the resurrection is that God wishes to turn mortal humankind into eternally living persons. God has not yet finished His human creation.

The belief in the resurrection of the dead, was foreign to the Jewish secular mind for many centuries. We can find some passages about the resurrection of the dead in the writings of prophets like Daniel and Hosea. When the disciples became persuaded about the reality of the resurrection of the dead, they became the forerunners of preachers of the Gospel all over the world. Like the travelers to Emmaus, we cannot see the Lord who is walking beside us. We do not recognize the One who is talking with us and we walk hopelessly. We still have not reached maturity. We cannot perceive the One whom we are inviting home. We have not yet sat down with him to dine on the blessed bread which is his body; Some prophets of the Old Testament, however, received an insight of divine understanding:

***1. I shall ransom them from the power of the grave. Shall I redeem them from death? O Death, where are your plagues? O Grave, where is your destruction? (Hosea 13;14)***

***2. You who have made me see many troubles and calamities will revive me again; from the depths of the earth you will bring me up again. (Psalm 71:20)***

***3. Your dead shall live, their corpses shall rise. O dwellers in the dust, awake and sing for joy! For your dew is a radiant dew, and the earth will give birth to those long dead. (Isaiah 26:19)***

The resurrection manifests the purpose and the intention of creation: why we exist, why we are, and where we are going. Humans understand the meaning of the universe and of our own existence from the resurrection of Jesus Christ, for Jesus declared, ***I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live. (John 11:25-26)***

The deceitful and untrue opinions of the priests collapsed under the testimony of the apostles. The apostles radiated with such unconquerable self-confidence that their religious opponents kept silent. Peter, the apostle, trumpeted the resurrection of his Lord so far and wide that the Jewish authorities which had crucified Jesus began to be on the defensive rather than the offensive. If the apostles' argument was about an artificial and deceitful resurrection, the chief priests and even Pilate himself would have intervened and refuted the apostles' claims. But the truth of the resurrection shocked and terrified the people of Jerusalem.

The Gospel is not a moral and ethical piece of legislation or a metaphysical theory. The Gospel primarily is a good and comforting message. The testimony of the apostles was believable. Why? Because of their absolute conviction about what they were witnessing. The natural and unnatural forces and authorities could not cover up the reality of the resurrection. Let us wake up from materialism and hateful doctrines and see the fruits of reconciliation and love.

**Christ is risen from the dead!  
He trampled down death by death**

**and by his resurrection he granted life unto us.  
Glory unto him for all ages. Amen.**

The superiority of the Gospel of Jesus is in the transforming force that changes sinful and immoral people into saintly and virtuous persons. Let us not forget two important figures. First, Mary Magdalene, the adulteress, who became a saintly woman and second, Zacchaeus, the money-hungry publican, who became a philanthropist, not only in words but, also, in actions.

***If the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through His Spirit that dwells in you. (Romans 8:11)***

***And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, and the redemption of our bodies. (Romans 8:23)***

A seed will become a plant or tree; the child an adult; and the illiterate a learned person. Life in the world is a continual effort passing from inaction to action, from imperfection to perfection, from nothing to something which is steady and continuous. Though the resurrection of Jesus is an historical fact or event, the how of that fact is humanly incomprehensible. We do not have the testimony of an eye witness that the dead body of Jesus miraculously received a spiritual body. Therefore, we say, "O Mystery, deep and inscrutable" in the Armenian Prayer Book.

Jesus does not reveal his risen and transfigured body to the world, but only to his friends and the favourites who love him. It is 'resurrection' when we live that faith which Christ taught us and commanded us to perform. It is 'resurrection' when we execute his love. It is 'resurrection' when our hope in Jesus is the force of our life. The church of Jesus can be known and understood only through the light of his resurrection. The resurrection of Jesus was not an apparition. It was not an ideal theory or a delusion. It became the apostolic church's invulnerable strength and inexhaustible force.

The public prefers and honours the dead rather than the living. Therefore, King Herod heard of Jesus because Jesus' name had become well known. The king and the people in his court said, "***John the Baptist has been raised from the dead; that is why these mighty powers are at work in him.***" (Mark 6:14) In Judicial decisions of the public, the dominating concepts usually are prejudice and supposition rather than fact and event.

St. Paul, from his rich treasury, wanted to share some of his visions with mature believers and to encourage their faith he wrote, ***Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death, even death on the cross. Therefore, God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every***

***tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:5-11)***

The above divine reflections and meditations of the apostle Paul, may urge us and oblige us not to preach doctrine, tenants and dogma, but to teach that Jesus Christ is our Saviour and teach Jesus' mission and faithfulness to God, the Father.

**HE ASCENDED INTO THE HEAVENS,  
AND SITTETH ON THE RIGHT HAND OF THE FATHER**

***1. No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. (John 3:13)***

***2. Only he who came from heaven, the Son of man, Who is in heaven (John 3:13)***

***3. Fellow Israelites, I may say to you confidently of our ancestor David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day ... For David did not ascend into the heavens. (Acts 2:29, 34)***

***4. Rejoice that your names are written in heaven. (Luke 10:20) When you die you will not perish.***

***5. For they have struggled beside me in the work of the gospel together with Clement and the rest of his co-workers, whose names are in the book of life. (Philip 4:3)***

***6. For the Lord himself, with a cry of command, with the archangel's call and with the sound of God's trumpet, will descend from heaven and the dead in Christ will rise first. (1 Thessalonians 4:16)***

Christ is the dazzling bridge which connects heaven and earth and it is the sustaining force of union. The Prodigal Son's confession "***I have sinned against heaven and in your sight. (Luke 15:18)***" means that our actions, good or bad, affect the whole universe of God which includes all life. In a relative sense it means all cosmic substances, planets and stars, have been taken care of by a loving God. Man is not alone.

***See that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world and not according to Christ. For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity dwells in bodily form. (Colossians 2:8)***

***Since you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world, why do you live as if you still belonged to the world? Why do you submit to regulations, 'Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!' All these regulations refer to things that perish. (Colossians 2:20)***

Some Christians reach above to the celestial light to see the "heavens opened". While the Deacon, Stephen, lay dying, ***He gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God and he said, Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of man standing at God's right hand! (Acts 7:55-56)***

Let us consider a humble question of a child to his loving father. Why did the risen Jesus not establish the Kingdom of God on earth but, instead, ascended to his Father? Jesus explained this to his disciples saying, ***Now I am going to Him who sent me; yet none of you ask me, 'Where are you going?' But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your hearts. Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your***

***advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Advocate will not come to you but if I go, I will send him to you. And when He comes, He will prove the world wrong about sin and righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will see me no longer; about judgment, because the ruler of this world has been condemned. I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. (John 16:5-12)***

The incarnate Jesus is a merciful and compassionate Son of God. He came to the world to reveal the true God who personally created humankind and continues to care, educate and save us from perishing. Jesus, by ascending to the Father, became the Intercessor in space and time. Peter and John, the apostles, said, ***There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we will be saved. (Acts 4:12)*** The church is spiritual and her relations should also be spiritual. Her relationship with the deceased is not suspended. To God all are alive. (Read Matthew 22:32 and Luke 20: 37-38)

**HE SHALL COME AGAIN WITH GLORY  
TO JUDGE BOTH THE LIVING AND THE DEAD;  
WHOSE KINGDOM SHALL HAVE NO END**

While Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples approached and asked Him in private, “Teacher” they said, “When will this be and what will be the sign that this is about to take place?”

Jesus answered them and said, ***Beware that no one leads you astray. For many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am the Messiah!’ and they will lead many astray. And you will hear of wars and rumours of wars; see that you are not alarmed, for this must take place, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places. Then they will hand you over to be tortured and will put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of my name. And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray... But the one who endures to the end will be saved. And this good news of the Kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the world, as a testimony to all the nations; and then the end will come (Matthew 24: 1-14)***

***And He will send out His angels with a loud trumpet call and they will gather His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. (Matthew 24:31)***

***Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. (Luke 21:27, Daniel --13-14)***

***Let no one deceive you in any way; for that day will not come unless the rebellion comes first and the lawless one is revealed, the one destined for destruction. (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4)***

***The coming of the lawless one is apparent in the working of Satan, who uses all power, signs, lying wonders and every kind of wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. (2 Thessalonians 2:9)***

Jesus Christ is the Lord of all humankind, the past and the present,

the living and the dead. St. Paul encourages the churches saying, ***With wisdom and insight He has made known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure that He set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. (Ephesians 1:10)***

Jesus is the Lord and the Head of the Church. The Kingdom of Jesus, as a mystery, is present in the world which is his Church. The Church is holy, but not perfect. Before the coming of Jesus, the Church will pass through great suffering, skepticism and unbelief.

***“When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?” said Jesus. (Luke 18:8)***

St Paul wrote to one of his young helpers, ***For the time is coming when people will not put up with sound doctrine, but having itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own desires, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander away to myths. (2 Timothy 4:34)***

***The people will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, inhuman implacable, slanderers, profligates, brutes, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding to the outward form of godliness, but denying its power. (2 Timothy 3:2-5)***

The present world, especially in the West, is identical with what the apostle indicated. The churches have become obsessed with marketing and consumerism.

### **I BELIEVE IN THE HOLY SPIRIT, THE LORD, THE GIVER OF LIFE WHO SPOKE BY THE PROPHETS**

To believe in the Holy Spirit surmises unity among the brethren and unanimous communion between the disciples. The Holy Spirit is like a window through which the mortal can see and communicate with the spiritual. The importance is not in theological terminology, but rather God's action in our lives. The life of a Christian is a spiritual and sanctified life. Jesus, looking at His disciples whom He loved, said, ***I am telling you nothing but the truth when I say, it is profitable for you that I go away. Because if I do not go away, the Comforter will not come to you. But if I go away, I will send Him to you. (John 16:7)***

***But when He, the Spirit of Truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth. For He will not speak His own message but He will tell whatever He hears. He will give the message that has been given to Him, and He will announce and declare to you the things that are to come. (John 16:13)***

The Spirit is the compensator for Jesus during His invisible presence from the world, ***And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Comforter that He may remain with you forever, the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive because it does not see Him nor know and recognize Him. But you know and recognize Him, for He lives with you and will be in you. (John 14:16-17)***

Matter by itself, has no force but, by the penetration of the Holy Spirit, matter begins to act. An electrical cable is just matter until it receives electrical power, otherwise it is like any other piece of copper wire. The heavenly Spirit is the unbreakable band between the members of the church. When the Spirit descended at Pentecost, the disciples became full of faith, bravery and love. The Spirit changes the human into the divine, clay into light and weakness into power.

The promise of the Holy Spirit is neither that of tongues nor of fire but of divine power. Jesus said before his ascension, ***I will send forth upon you what my Father has promised; but remain in Jerusalem until you are clothed with power from on High. The disciples spoke in different languages, not because the grace of speaking in tongues was the highest grace, but, by speaking in different tongues, they could communicate with all the Jews of the city who spoke different languages. Jesus never said that by speaking in tongues you will receive the Spirit. Jesus said that the Spirit will teach and remind you of all that I told you.*** How many of today's preachers teach **all** that Jesus has told them?

### **I BELIEVE IN ONE, HOLY, CATHOLIC, AND APOSTOLIC CHURCH**

It is very difficult among nominal Christian nations to recite the above statement of faith sincerely, honestly and intimately. I say this because during my numerous travels when I am asked my nationality, I say that I am Armenian. The second question is usually "What is your religion?" My answer is "Armenian Christian". The third question becomes "Are you Catholic or Orthodox?" Without hesitation I repeat, "I am Christian."

Any church's existence within itself and for itself should not and cannot be an end. The church should exist, not for itself, but for a purpose and that purpose should be to execute its role as commanded by Jesus. The role of the church on this earth is found in Matthew: ***All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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, teaching them to observe everything that I have commanded you. (Matthew 28:19)***

Jesus does not command his followers to baptize in the name of a particular church, but in His name. The name "Christian" is not the name of a particular shop or a nation. Every time Jesus refers to the "Church" as "My Church". St. Paul never used the name of a national church or the name of a particular denomination when writing his letters. He sent his letters to the churches which were in Rome, to the churches in Corinth, and so on.

The Armenian churches which are called with such a beautiful name, "Armenian Apostolic and Orthodox Church", make me proud. I have a question to my beloved Armenian brethren who have lost parents and brothers during the 1915 genocide: After 1,700 years, do we still have the zeal and the calling of the Apostles? And if we do, what are we doing today? We built a church in Toronto 50 years ago, but how many clergy have we produced and how many young people have become missionaries? Let each

reader answer for him or herself.

Believing Christians can differ nationally and racially, but they cannot and should not differ in faith, love and denomination. The concept of Christianity is much superior to the word 'religion'. Christians believe in a living God who sent His only begotten Son down from heaven to live among people, and show His glory to men and women. Unfortunately, people loved themselves more than they loved God. Christianity is not a concept, or an ideal, or a philosophy, It is a reality. Pagans have had many gods, but who among all of their gods and goddesses became flesh and lived among us? How many of those gods ever did a miracle? How many of them loved humankind, and how many of them suffered in our stead?

Christians do not believe in a holy book. We believe in a living personal God, who became human to make us divine, to raise us from prejudice and selfishness so that we could love our neighbour and even love the unlovable. We have been raised to self-sacrifice and to a sanctified holy life.

The love of Jesus Christ, his faith and crucifixion, and the breaking of His Body and Blood as a Holy Communion, must join and unite us, regardless of whatever nation, race or denomination to which we belong. Our Christian living should be so much superior to any philosophy and nationalism and racial barriers, that our faith and love of one another will supersede all divisions and be reflected in our daily behaviour to one another. This is the cardinal commandment that Jesus demonstrated through His crucifixion by saying, ***By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another. (John 13:35)***

The church is a holy congregation. If ever it is not sanctified, it cannot be called the Church of Jesus Christ. It should be holy by its faith, holy by its behaviour, and holy by its members. God the Creator and not the creature is worshiped in church. Under the vault of the church, the humble prayer soars and reaches to God. Christ founded One Church. He named it **"My Church"**. The church of Christ can be acknowledged and recognized by its unity to the Shepherd who is its Head.

Today, if the Church and the faith seem to be in retreat and the new generation ungodly, the reason is because the churches have only the appearance of holiness, and, in fact, have denied its force and truth. The members of churches today do not live what they preach and it offends many of the new generation. I write these lines with sorrow and grief. Many of those offended people have spoken to me saying, "We are not ungodly. We simply do not believe in the god of the churches."

### **WE ACKNOWLEDGE ONE BAPTISM FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS**

During the baptismal ceremony, be it of a baby or an adult, Satan and his demons shudder and tremble when they hear the name of Jesus because one of their subjects is becoming Jesus-born and subject to Jesus. A married couple who have a five-year old daughter and a three-year old son who are not yet baptized have a conversation. The husband says to his wife, "Our children are not yet baptized, but let us wait until we have some money so we can have a big celebration at their baptism." How lamentable is this concept held by many married couples about their Christian religious

heritage! Which is more important - the baptism of their children or the celebration and the banquet? Materialism makes us reach for the grave, but faith and dedication to God will carry us to eternal life.

The person who says that he or she is Christian, should also pass through the baptism of the Spirit, which will convey to him or her the understanding of the Christian faith and a new response to their religion. The Christian baptism is not a rhetorical speech or a banquet, but it is a humble and sanctified service to others.

Repentance is a human being's intellectual and spiritual coming or return to him or her self, a total moving around towards the good, the upright and the holy. It is not an artificial change, but an innate and total transformation of the intellect and the will. Repentance is turning our faith away from worldly desires and responding to the call of the Absolute and Divine.

From Jesus' perspective, the enemy of humanity was the fear of the unknown, the concern and the anxiety. To disperse and dissipate fear, Jesus, the Son, presented God, the creator, as the **Heavenly Father**.

The first message of Jesus after his baptism was, ***"Repent" [that is change your mind for the better; heartily amend your ways with abhorrence for your past sins] for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*** The divine news for salvation has always been the same for the ideal church. At present some churches are being emptied because they do not have that missionary zeal which the apostles showed in the first century.

There are times and situations in human lives when inner powers force us to change the course of our conduct and behaviour. It is this type of change which Jesus meant and He called it 'repentance' or coming to yourself.

At the day of Pentecost, those who demanded the crucifixion of Jesus regretted what they had done and they asked Peter and the rest of the apostles, ***"Brethren, what shall we do?"*** Peter answered them, ***"Repent. Change your views and purpose to accept the will of God in your inner selves instead of rejecting it."*** Although repentance is an inner and spiritual attitude and change, that change and attitude must be proven by action. Therefore, the apostles said, ***"Do deeds consistent with repentance."*** (Acts 26:20)

Prayer becomes worthy to God when a person prays in the presence of the Spirit in humility and with a contrite heart. Repentance is the road which leads each individual from death to life eternal. That is why Jesus says, ***There is joy among and in the presence of the angels of God over one wicked person who repents for his past sins.*** (Luke 15:10)

## **WE LOOK FOR THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD**

The lives of all the apostles ended with suffering, bereavement, strife and martyrdom in order not to perish the light of eternity, which is Jesus Christ. Jesus is our life, the essence of our existence and the fountain of our energy and He will be the mystery of our perpetual living. Christ is the source of our contemplation. ***We consider and look not to the things that are seen, but to the things that are unseen; for the things that are visible are temporal, but the things that are invisible are***

**deathless and everlasting. (2 Corinthians 4:18)**

The roadway of the Gospel writers and the translators of the Bible was to see beyond the visible to the unseen, beyond the temporal to the eternal. It was **faith** that gave them power and the ability to overcome their temporary sufferings. The inspired prophet, Hosea, said, I shall ransom them from the power of the grave, I shall redeem them from death. (Hosea 13:14)

Our view of life depends on whether we believe in the resurrection of the dead or whether we believe that we end it in the grave, like a Greek tragedy. In an ancient drama, it did not matter how much the hero was triumphant, his end was still death. Jesus preached for three years and concluded his mission by saying, ***I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this? (John 11:25)***

The ungodly could not continue beyond the grave. However, the hope of the resurrection gives the individual courage for the everyday struggle without fear from death and perishing. The resurrection is the highest point from which a Christian can look to the past and also to the future and be sure that his or her faith in Jesus will give him or her eternal life. Jesus is the truth.

The Resurrection will continue to be the most glorified aureola and inspiring celebration of the glory and legacy of the life of Christ.

A believer will live his or her earthly life by the faith that has been granted to that person, not only by speech, but also by the life which he or she radiates. It is the 'resurrection' when we express God's love. It is the 'resurrection' when our hope comes from the fountain of Christ. The lives and the vision of the disciples were mostly centered around the resurrection of their Lord. The Church of Jesus Christ is mostly known because of his resurrection and victory over death.

The psychology of the Last Judgment and the condemnation of the wicked is not popular with the public today, especially the judgment of God. We prefer to believe in a god who will regard the past as forgotten and will overlook our failures and sins. According to the Gospel, God is Love. Love without justice becomes a meaningless delusion. The grace of God reached its perfection in Jesus Christ. The grace is that act which God does for us, because humanity cannot achieve it for itself. ***I charge thee, therefore, before God and the Lord Jesus Christ who shall judge the quick and the dead at his Second Coming. Therefore, judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every person have praise of God. (1 Corinthians 4:5)***

***Who art thou that judges another man's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Yea, he shall be held up; for God is able to make him stand. (Romans 14:5)*** That person who cannot see the Creator in the beautiful wonders of the cosmos is not lacking faith, but judgment!

## **AND THE LIFE OF THE AGE TO COME. AMEN**

Jesus loved specially those who became poor for the sake of the Kingdom. The Kingdom of Heaven does not promise riches, but it wishes that those who would like to enter freely choose poverty. Jesus says, ***“Allow the little children to come to me, and do not hinder them, for the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to such as these. (Luke 18:16).*** There could be some people who will think that the word “children” means “childishness”. When Jesus spoke the word “children”, he wanted to point out their unprejudiced and sincere spiritual behaviour with one another. Love is the golden key to the Kingdom and “regret” the price of salvation.

The Transfiguration of Jesus on Mount Tabor, was a preview to the coming of God’s Kingdom on earth. Momentarily, Jesus showed His true and glorious nature when the saints will reign on earth for evermore. Jesus Christ preached the Kingdom of God on earth through his incarnation. Through his miraculous healings, he put the Kingdom of God into motion on earth through his Church and through the loyal and loving followers who shared his vision.

The words, ***“What shall I do to inherit the Kingdom of God?”*** are mentioned only a few times in the synoptic gospels, but they are mentioned 15 times in the Gospel of John!

It is not the Church and the hundreds of denominations in the world that eventually will become the Kingdom of God on earth. The present churches are the blacksmith shops where Christian believers are being forged and prepared to live and serve in the Kingdom of God. In all the world it is the Church which is the visible hope of mankind. Its elected loyal members will become the heads and governing members of this worldwide earth which in space looks like a blue dot. Let us read what was shown to the prophet, Daniel, in a vision: ***The kingship and dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the saints, the people of the Most High; Their kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom and all the dominions shall serve and obey them. (Daniel 7:27)***

In Christ, the past ceases to be the past. In him, the present becomes the past.

**In Jesus Christ, the murmur  
SHALL TURN TO MARCHING**

**January 24, 2001  
Toronto**