Toward the Making of the Creed

No ecumenical decision of the Church was ever construed in terms of an empty teaching, an ideology that did not draw on the ecclesial experience and that was manifestly irrelevant to the life of God’s people. Dogma and life, as well as theology and experience, hold inextricably together. This is likewise true about the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, which cannot be treated, therefore, as a doctrinal proclamation deprived of significance for the Christian life. As pointed out by St Cyril of Jerusalem, one of the first patristic commentators on the Creed of Nicaea, true, collated with the traditional confession of his own city, “the manner of [our] godly way (θεοσεβείας τρόπος) consists of these two things, reverent doctrines (δογμάτων εύσεβῶν) and good practices (πράξεων ἀγαθῶν).”¹ We shall see in what follows that the Holy Fathers involved in either the making or the defence and explanation of the Creed, stressed both the importance of orthodoxy (ὁρθοδοξία), the right understanding, as a necessary guide for orthopraxy (ὁρθοπραξία), the correct way of life, and the value of the latter as a confirmation of the former. For instance, St John Chrysostom maintained that we should conduct ourselves in such a way “that [our] life is in an accord with the dogmas and that dogmas proclaim the [manner of] life” (ἵνα καὶ ὁ βίος συμφωνή τοῖς δόγμασι, καὶ τὰ δόγματα κηρύττῃ τὸν βίον), adding that both dogmas without confirmation in a corresponding lifestyle are vain and life without doctrinal guidance is to no avail.² These principles are obvious in the very structure of the Creed, which continues the doctrinal statements concerning the Holy Trinity by articles referring to the sacramental regeneration of life and the eschatological hope that mobilises our undertakings in the here and now. It is not without reason, therefore, that alongside its liturgical proclamation the Creed is supposed to be read by any Orthodox Christian every day, among the morning prayers. It is precisely this connection between dogma and life that constitutes the object of this presentation, which will be exemplified by the various patristic approaches to the Creed. Before that, there are in order a few thoughts on the patristic context of the making of the Creed.

The Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed did not emerge out of nothing; the first two ecumenical synods (Nicaea, 325; Constantinople, 381) have not innovated a formula of compromise meant to make peace between various opposing factions, like in modern political debates. In fact, by bringing to a synthesis the faith that was already and widely confessed throughout the apostolic Churches, the two councils have given an articulate expression to the faith that was common, established and well known. Indeed, within the Creed there are obvious traces of earlier formulae – such as

¹ Catechisms for Those about to Be Enlightened, 4.2.
² Homilies on Genesis, 2.14.
scriptural wisdom, patristic syntheses, and elements from baptismal and martyrdom confessions, showing that the Fathers who participated in the two synods were not interested in introducing a novel teaching. What they intended was to give a common testimony to a truth that was known to the Churches and that had already received various traditional expressions. For this reason the early Greek-speaking Christians and their heirs in Orthodoxy through the ages preferred the word σώνοδος, or ‘common way,’ to the Latin concilium (wherefrom ‘council’ in English) in order to designate the ecclesiastical assemblies that discussed matters pertaining to the faith and the life of God’s people; thus, the term σώνοδος refers to the task of the participants, namely, to give witness to what is the ‘common way’ in both faith and life. More precisely, the term signifies the fact that instead of negotiating formulae of compromise, the Fathers that participated in the ecumenical synods were called to discern what was common faith and accepted practice, whilst rejecting what was alien to the apostolic Churches.

This discernment was based on a number of criteria, of which one of the most important referred to the testimonies of the Church Fathers; a ‘patristic’ criterion therefore. Indeed, during the synodical debates, the participants would refer to the written and unwritten tradition of the Church, in a legitimate effort to pinpoint what recognised saintly teachers taught in the various Churches, from the apostles onwards. Although this aspect does not constitute the main object of the present analysis, it is

3 As stated by St Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechisms for Those about to Be Enlightened, 5.12.
4 See for instance a Christological statement in St Ignatius (the God-bearer) of Antioch. “I glorify God, Jesus Christ, who has given you such wisdom. For I have observed that you are perfected in an immoveable faith, as if you were nailed to the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, both in the flesh and in the spirit, and are established in love through the blood of Christ, being fully persuaded with respect to our Lord, that he was truly of the seed of David in terms of the flesh, and the Son of God in terms of the will and power of God; that he was truly born of a virgin, was baptised by John, in order that all righteousness might be fulfilled by him; and was truly, under Pontius Pilate and Herod the tetrarch, nailed [to the cross] for us in his flesh. Of this fruit we are by his divinely-blessed passion, that he might set up a standard for all ages, through his resurrection, to all his holy and faithful [disciples], whether among Jews or Gentiles, in the one body of his Church” (Epistle to the Smyrneans, 1).
5 See for instance the description of the baptismal rite offered by St Justin Martyr. “As many as are persuaded and believe that what we teach and say is true, and undertake to be able to live accordingly, are instructed to pray and to entreat God with fasting, for the remission of their sins that are past, we praying and fasting with them. Then they are brought by us where there is water, and are regenerated in the same manner in which we were ourselves regenerated. For, in the name of God, the Father and Lord of the universe, and of our Saviour Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit, they then receive the washing with water. […] [T]he is pronounced over them who choose to be born again, and have repented of their sins, the name of God the Father and Lord of the universe […] And this washing is called illumination, because they who learn these things are illuminated in their understandings. And, in the name of Jesus Christ, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, and in the name of the Holy Spirit, who through the prophets foretold all things about Jesus, those who are illuminated are washed” (First Apology, 61).
6 See for instance the last prayer of St Polycarp of Smyrna. “O Lord God Almighty, the Father of your beloved and blessed Son Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the knowledge of you, the God of angels and powers, and of every creature, and of the whole race of the righteous who live before you, I give you thanks for having counted me worthy of this day and this hour, that I should have a part in the number of your martyrs, in the cup of your Christ, to the resurrection of eternal life, both of soul and body, through the incorruption of the Holy Spirit. Among whom may I be accepted this day before you as a fat and acceptable sacrifice, as you, the ever-truthful God, has foreordained, has revealed beforehand to me, and now has fulfilled. Wherefore also I praise you for all things, I bless you, I glorify you, along with the everlasting and heavenly Jesus Christ, your beloved Son, with whom, to you, and the Holy Spirit, be glory both now and to all coming ages. Amen” (Martyrdom of St Polycarp, 14).
not disconnected from the topic addressed below. In what follows, my interest is to illustrate the ‘patristic’ principle associated with both the making of the Creed and its defence and/or interpretation. To this end, I shall discuss specific contributions of the Orthodox key-players during the fourth century doctrinal controversies.

On the Son of God: The Faith of Nicaea

Contrary to popular opinion, St Athanasius the Great was not a prominent figure during the first ecumenical synod (Nicaea, 325). At the time, he was a very young deacon and secretary of St Alexander, archbishop of Alexandria. Whether or not the young deacon wrote for his archbishop the latter’s famous doctrinal letters concerning Arius, as certain scholars affirm, it was definitely St Alexander that represented the Church of Alexandria and Egypt at the ecumenical synod. The minutes of the first two ecumenical councils are not preserved, unfortunately, and so it is difficult to assert what was the precise role of each of the participants; the writings and letters of the witnesses, including St Athanasius, allow only for a partial reconstitution of the proceedings. For this reason, we cannot establish with any certainty who among the delegates proposed the word ὁμοούσιος (“of one essence”) to be included within the statement concerning the equality of the Son incarnate, our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Father. It may be that St Athanasius urged his archbishop to propose the term, which was already in use in the theological vocabulary of Alexandria since the second and third century writers, Clement and Origen. Thus, the traditional ascription of the ὁμοούσιος initiative to St Athanasius might not be very far from the truth, even though the then young deacon could not have directly spoken in an episcopal gathering. What matters here is that the term was not a novelty and that it was part of the Alexandrine theological patrimony.

Regarding the technical term ὁμοούσιος and for a better understanding of the complexities entailed by the making of the Creed, three notes are in order. Firstly, the Alexandrines were not the only ones who used this word before Nicaea. Whilst Clement and Origen employed the ὁμοούσιος in an Orthodox fashion, between 264 and 266 a series of local councils in Antioch condemned the heretical rendition of this term in the writings and sermons of the city’s bishop, Paul of Samosata; this synodical condemnation proved to weigh during the fourth century controversies, many bishops expressing reluctance toward ὁμοούσιος precisely because of this Antiochene incident. We can safely surmise, therefore, that the ὁμοούσιος initiative belonged to the Alexandrine and not the Antiochene bishops, although we cannot identify the actual proponent of this term. Secondly, and related, in matters pertaining to the equality of the Son and the Father, the preferred expression of St Alexander of Alexandria was not ὁμοούσιος; instead, he affirmed their relationship by pointing out the Son’s belonging with the Father. Thus, for St Alexander to state that the Son was “proper to the Father” (ἰδίος τῷ Πατρί) was sufficient to affirm the Orthodox faith. Together with the absence of the term ὁμοούσιος in his known writings, this preference for “proper to the Father” may indicate that in fact St Alexander was not the proponent of ὁμοούσιος at the great synod. Furthermore, and thirdly, like his predecessor, in his anti-Arian writings St Athanasius himself did not manifest special preference for the key-term “of one essence,” without actually avoiding it entirely. Moreover, he affirmed⁷ that the word was adopted at Nicaea mainly because

⁷ See On the Decree of Nicaea, 19.
alongside stating that the Son “is not proper to the essence of the Father” (οὐκ ἔστιν ἰὸς τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ Πατρὸς), St Athanasius also coined a contrary term to designate the lack of essential identity between the Father and the Son, namely, ἐτερόθυσος (“of a different essence”). The above seem to indicate that St Athanasius was not at all the mastermind behind the adoption of ὁμοούσιος by the synod. Consequently, we have to admit that we may never know whose initiative was the adoption of this term; St Athanasius’ reference to the “Fathers” and the “Bishops” that decided in its favour is not very helpful. Relevant here is that St Alexander’s and St Athanasius’ respective approaches suggest that the Nicene faith cannot be reduced to a single word, whether ὁμοούσιος or another. Likewise, other defenders of the Nicene faith, such as St Basil the Great and St Cyril of Jerusalem, deliberately chose to express the Nicene faith in non-confrontational ways, for the peace of their respective dioceses – the former by alternating the accepted terms and the latter by altogether avoiding ὁμοούσιος, even when he interpreted the Nicene Creed in the framework of the faith of Jerusalem. That said, when the case, the Fathers did not shy away from utilising a very technical vocabulary in order to refute the Arian subtleties. For instance, St Athanasius stated uncompromisingly,

[Christ] is true Son of the Father, natural and genuine (φύσει καὶ γνήσιος), proper to his essence (ἰὸς τῆς οὐσίας αὐτοῦ), Wisdom Only-begotten, both true and only Logos of God; neither made nor a creature (οὐκ ἔστι κτίσμα ὁμοῖο τοῦ κτίσματος), but offspring proper to the essence of the Father (ἰὸς τῆς οὐσίας γέννημα). Therefore he is true God (Θεὸς ἐστιν ἡλιθινός), being of one essence with the true Father (ἁληθινὸς Πατρὸς ὁμοούσιος ὑπάρχων).

As a further illustration of the Orthodox doctrine articulated by way of a non-technical vocabulary, perhaps we should briefly return to St Alexander of Alexandria. Right before Nicaea, and opposing Arius who “contended against Christ, denying the divinity of our Saviour,” St Alexander highlighted the traditional doctrine of the Holy Trinity, the Church and our future hope, inspired by earlier confessions. In his own words,

We thus believe, as the apostolic Church believes. In one Father unbegotten, who has from no one the cause of his being, who is unchangeable and immutable, who is always the same, and admits of no increase or diminution; who gave to us the Law, the prophets, and the Gospels; who is Lord of the patriarchs and apostles, and all the saints. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God; not begotten of things that are not, but of the Father; not in a corporeal manner […], but in a certain inexplicable and unutterable manner […]. We have learnt that he is equally with the Father unchangeable and immutable, wanting in nothing, and the perfect Son, and like to the Father […]. He is the exact image of the Father, and in nothing differing from him. […] And according to this we believe that the Son is of the Father, always existing. […] Therefore to the unbegotten Father, indeed, we ought to preserve his proper dignity, in confessing that no one is the cause of his being; and to the Son must be allotted his fitting honour, in ascribing to him […] a generation

8 Cited in St Athanasius, Orations against the Arians, 1.9.
9 On the Decree of Nicaea, 19-20.
10 Orations against the Arians, 1.9.
11 St Alexander of Alexandria, Letter to Alexander of Constantinople, 1.
from the Father without beginning, and allotting adoration to him [...], by no means rejecting his divinity. [...] And alongside the pious opinion concerning the Father and the Son, we confess one Holy Spirit [...]. Furthermore, [we confess] one catholic and apostolic Church [...]. After this we know of the resurrection of the dead, the first-fruits of which was our Lord Jesus Christ, who indeed and not in appearance merely, carried a body of Mary the Theotokos; who in the fullness of time came to the human race to put away sin, was crucified and died, [...] being risen from the dead, taken up into heaven, seated at the right hand of majesty.\textsuperscript{12}

Even without the above passage mentioning the term ὁ ὄμοούσιος, we recognise within it the very content of the Creed; in all likelihood, this passage was adopted as a draft on which the Fathers of Nicæa worked toward the making of the actual Creed. Highly significant is the conviction of St Alexander that, in being eternally with his Father, the Son “is by nature the Son of the Father,” in which capacity he is able to bless those that are being made children of God “by adoption.”\textsuperscript{13} In other words, the saint believed that our divine adoption, or deification, would be impossible if the Son of God were not true God. In his heroic advocacy for the Nicene faith, St Athanasius closely followed this line of thinking. He affirmed, “if the Son were a creature (κτίσμα), humanity had remained no less than mortal, not being joined to God (μὴ συναπτόμενος τῷ Θεῷ).”\textsuperscript{14} As an endorsement of this conviction, he ascribed to St Antony the Great the following statement, which the latter seemingly conveyed upon his visit to Alexandria:

The Logos of God was not changed, but remaining the same (ὁ αὐτὸς ὄν) he assumed a human body for the salvation and benefit of humankind – so that sharing in the human birth he might enable mankind to share in the divine and spiritual nature (ἵνα, τῇ ἀνθρωπίνῃ γενέσει κοινωνήσας, ποιήσῃ τοὺς ἀνθρώπους κοινωνῆσαι θείας καὶ νοερᾶς φύσεως).\textsuperscript{15}

These soteriological implications confirm that the Fathers stood for the very core of the Christian experience and not some empty ideological statements. To say it differently, for the Holy Fathers the shape of our faith is dictated by salvific considerations.

\section*{On the Holy Spirit: The Faith of Constantinople}

The situation is not much clearer regarding the second ecumenical synod (Constantinople, 381). Despite the insistence of St Gregory the Theologian, who wished to impose the utilisation of ὁ ὄμοούσιος for the relationship between the Holy Spirit and the other two divine persons, the participants preferred the more pastoral approach illustrated by St Athanasius, St Cyril of Jerusalem and St Basil, who articulated the true faith without largely utilising this still controversial key-term. In fact, together with St Gregory, St Athanasius and St Basil were at the forefront of defending Orthodoxy against the pneumatological rehearsal of Arianism, namely, the heresy of Macedonius. The first to react against the pneumatomachians (‘those

\textsuperscript{12} Letter to Alexander of Constantinople, 12.
\textsuperscript{13} Letter to Alexander of Constantinople, 7.
\textsuperscript{14} Orations against the Arians, 2.69.
\textsuperscript{15} St Athanasius, Life of St Antony, 69.
fighting the Spirit’) was the champion of Nicene Orthodoxy, St Athanasius the Great, who refuted the new heresy in four letters addressed to bishop Serapion of Thmuis, probably in 357. Therein, along with reviewing the rich scriptural teaching on the Holy Spirit, the Alexandrine shepherd reiterated the Nicene faith by translating the discourse on the Son’s divinity in terms of the Spirit’s equality with both the Father and the Son. Thus, entirely like the Son, the Spirit belongs to the Father (οὗτος τοῦ πατρός ἔστι τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον, ἵνα τοῦ ὅπερ εἴρηται) and has an uncreated status (οὐκ ἔστι κτίσμα τὸ πνεῦμα). Nevertheless, St Athanasius pointed out that, whilst being in the Son and the Son in him (ἐν αὐτῷ γὰρ ἔστιν ὁ νός καὶ αὐτὸ ἐν τῷ νῷ), the divine Spirit could not be confused with either the Father or the Son, having his own personal uniqueness and contribution to the general divine economy. As already mentioned, although acknowledging the Spirit as God and as being of a divine nature, guided by pastoral discernment St Athanasius did not persist in utilising the term ὁμοούσιος, preferring the less controversial phrase, ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ (“from God”). What mattered for him was not a word; it was the soteriological necessity that the Holy Spirit is God and equal in everything with the other persons of the Holy Trinity, which warrants for our true union with God and deification through the gift bestowed by the Spirit. This union and deification could not have been construed if the Spirit’s divinity was denied, and in the absence of a rigorous Trinitarian perspective – since we are baptised in the name of the Holy Trinity and since “the given grace and gift are communicated [to us] by the Trinity, from the Father through the Son and in the Holy Spirit” (ἡ γὰρ διδομένη χάρις καὶ δωρεὰ ἐν τριάδι δίδοται παρὰ τοῦ πατρός δι’ νοῦ ἐν πνεῦματι ἁγίῳ). Thus, St Athanasius’ reasons for defending the divinity of the Spirit were as soteriological as those he utilised to advocate the divinity of the Son; for him, as for all the other Fathers, dogma had to correspond to the ecclesial experience and aspirations.

Although reluctant to get involved in the new controversy, like St Athanasius a little earlier St Basil undertook to prove the divinity of the Spirit without making recourse to the Nicene key-term ὁμοούσιος. Due to his pastoral insight, he realised that the implementation of this controversial term could not have contributed to bringing peace to his troubled diocese. Instead, he took a genial path by alternating the customary doxology, δόξα Πατρί διὰ τοῦ Υἱοῦ ἐν τῷ ἁγίῳ Πνεύματι (“glory to the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit”), which could have been misinterpreted as suggesting a subordination within the Trinity, with a new doxology, δόξα Πατρί μετὰ τοῦ Υἱοῦ σὺν τῷ Πνεύματι τῷ ἁγίῳ (“glory to the Father together with the Son and with the Holy Spirit”), which eliminated this danger. In doing so, he seems to have followed in the footsteps of St Cyril of Jerusalem, who affirmed a little earlier that the Spirit “is honoured with the glory of the Godhead together with the Father and the

17 Letters to Serapion on the Holy Spirit, 2.10-16.
18 Letters to Serapion on the Holy Spirit, 2.10. Lit. “the Holy Spirit belongs to the Father as the Son equally does, as it is said.”
19 Letters to Serapion on the Holy Spirit, 3.4. Lit. “the Spirit is not creation.”
22 Which he did use once. See Letters to Serapion on the Holy Spirit, 1.27: τὸ πνεῦμα … τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐνός ἅντες ἰδίον καὶ ὁμοούσιον.
23 Letters to Serapion on the Holy Spirit, 2.11.
25 See On the Holy Spirit, 1.3.
Son” (ὅπερ σὺν Πατρὶ καὶ Υἱῷ τῆς θεότητος δόξῃ τετίμηται).26 Whilst advocating the legitimacy of the new doxology, throughout the treatise St Basil espoused in great detail the manifold proofs of the Spirit’s equality in honour with the Father and the Son, which for him was the same as saying identity of essence. In the process, he developed a very complex doctrine of the Spirit, which took the Spirit’s divinity as a presupposition for the wellbeing of the cosmos and the fulfilment of those seeking perfection, and likewise presented the life of the creation and our sanctification as proofs of the Spirit’s divine identity. In his own words,

To him turn all things needing sanctification, after him reach all things that live in virtue, as being watered by his inspiration and helped on toward their natural and proper end; perfecting all other things but himself lacking in nothing; he gives life to all things (ζωῆς χορηγόν) and is never depleted; not growing by additions, but straightway full, self-established, omnipresent (πανταχοῦ ὄν), origin of sanctification, light perceptible to the mind, supplying, as it were, through himself, illumination to every faculty in the search for truth; by nature unapproachable, apprehended through goodness, filling all things with his power (πάντα πληροῦν τῇ δυνάµει) yet participated in only by the worthy ones; not shared in one measure, but distributing his energy according to the proportion of faith; in essence simple, in powers various, wholly present in each and being wholly everywhere, he is distributed without change, shared without loss of integrity, after the likeness of the sunbeam, whose kindly light falls on him who enjoys it as though it shone for him alone, yet illumines land and sea and mingles with the air. So, too, is the Spirit to every one who receives him, as though given to him alone, and yet he sends forth grace sufficient and full for all, and is enjoyed by all that participate (τὰ μετέχοντα) in him according to their capacity, not according to his power.27

This superb hymn dedicated to the Spirit’s economy, which on its own would require a detailed analysis, shows that there is no dimension of the created sphere – from mere existence to the life of holiness – that can function outside the active presence of the Holy Spirit. In portraying him as a providential and sanctifying factor, St Basil demonstrated that the Holy Spirit is none other than God, which he conveyed by paraphrasing the words of Scripture, Πνεῦμα, φησίν, ὁ Θεός.28

The champion of the Spirit’s divinity, St Gregory the Theologian developed a similar line of reasoning, whilst, in his Fifth Theological Oration (delivered in autumn, 380), openly proclaimed that the Spirit is God (θεός τὸ πνεῦμα) and thus “of one essence” (ὁμοούσιον) with the Father and the Son.29 His elaborations were instrumental towards the articulation of the Orthodox faith in the Holy Spirit yet the second ecumenical council did not adopt verbatim his approach, which seemingly lacked in pastoral sensitivity. Indeed, the Fathers gathered in Constantinople did not repeat the famous affirmations utilised for the Son, as “true God from true God” and “of one essence with the Father,” preferring the indirect acknowledgment of the Spirit as God by stating that he is “worshipped and glorified together with the Father and the Son.” We recognise in this creedal sentence the spirit of the doxology introduced by St Basil

26 Catechisms for Those about to Be Enlightened, 4.16.
29 Oration 31.10.
in the Church of Caesarea, and therefore the pastoral discernment of the Cappadocian shepherd. The decision of the synod in favour of St Basil’s tactful approach must have been made under the influence of the great Cappadocian’s younger sibling, St Gregory of Nyssa, who likewise played a prominent role during the conciliar debates and even more so afterwards.

### Interpreting the Creed with the Fathers

The above survey of the relevant patristic contributions makes plain that the articles of the Creed represent summarised expressions of the otherwise complex and broad theological teachings of the Holy Fathers; therefore, the Creed cannot be properly considered outside the patristic context of its formulation, as it cannot be dissociated from the Scriptures. It is natural therefore to seek guidance in the writings of the Fathers that dealt with the Creed, and/or similar confessions, at the time of their making, for which reason I shall briefly refer to one such witness as a conclusion to this presentation. Before that, however, a few remarks are in order, concerning the place of the Creed in the Church immediately after the second ecumenical synod.

After Nicaea and with the completion of this venerable confession of the faith at Constantinople, followed by the decision to have its text incorporated in the baptismal and eucharistic celebrations, the Creed became a landmark of Orthodoxy from the last two decades of the fourth century onwards. It should not come as a surprise therefore that we find in the patristic tradition examples of its text being utilised for catechetical and doctrinal purposes. True, the two *Baptismal Instructions* of St John Chrysostom ignored any solid doctrinal initiation, focusing instead upon the sacramental regeneration and the ethical commitments of the newly illumined, yet the painful Christological controversies of the fifth century took as a pretext the Creed and its correct interpretation, and so did the later debates around the Western addition, the *Filioque*. Given its significance, the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed was in fact endorsed by the next two ecumenical synods (Ephesus, 431; Chalcedon, 451) as the perfect expression of Orthodoxy; the two councils prohibited any further changes of the text of the Creed.

In what follows I propose a brief overview of how the *Catechisms for Those about to Be Enlightened*, delivered ca. 350 (before the finalisation of the Creed) by St Cyril of Jerusalem, addressed the significance of Church doctrine. These catechisms reserve ample space for the explanation of the Nicene faith and in fact interpret the Creed line by line, within the framework of the broader baptismal instruction pertaining to the ecclesial tradition of Jerusalem.

Thus, in preparation of those about to be baptised “for the delivery of the Creed” (τῆς εἰς τὴν Πίστιν παράσοφεις), St Cyril offered a summary of the faith in the Father as the one God, creator of all that is and transcending all that is; in the Son as both God and man, visible and invisible (ὁ Ἰησοῦς Χριστός, ἀνθρώπως μὲν τὸ φανόμενον, μέτα τὸ φανόμενον).

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30 See the correspondence between St Cyril of Alexandria and Nestorius of Constantinople, mainly the former’s second and third letters addressed to the latter.
31 See the relevant works of St Photius of Constantinople, such as the *Mystagogy of the Holy Spirit* and the correspondence with John VIII of Rome.
32 *Catechisms for Those about to Be Enlightened*, 4.3.
33 *Catechisms for Those about to Be Enlightened*, 4.4-6.
Θεὸς δὲ τὸ μὴ φανόμενον, and his salvific economy recapitulated in the moments of the incarnation, cross, tomb, resurrection, ascension and the final judgment; in the Holy Spirit, believed to possess all the divine perfections preached about the Father and the Son, the “sanctifier and deifier of all” (τὸ πάντων ἁγιαστικὸν καὶ θεοποιόν); in the soul; in the body, food and clothes, and its resurrection; in the baptismal regeneration; and in Scripture. After this synthetic introduction, which of course takes in consideration more than the current content of the Creed, within the next catechism St Cyril recited the text for the audience and invited them to memorise it as being a faithful summary of the Scriptures. He also warned them, correlative, that in order to make sense of the whole significance of this creedal summary they should diligently look into the Scriptures for confirmation and details. The rest of the catechetical lectures, from the sixth to the eighteenth, deal at length with the articles of the Nicene Creed and a series of articles that came to be incorporated later in the Constantinopolitan Creed. What matters here is that from the outset St Cyril presented this entire catechetical program as a necessary condition for a proper initiation into the Christian life; again, doctrine and life were seen as going hand in hand. Understandably, therefore, the holy bishop exhorted his listeners, “attend closely to the teachings, and […] do not let your mind be wearied out. […] Study our teachings and keep them forever. […] For we deliver to you a mystery and a hope of the life to come. […] [And so,] may the gate of Paradise be opened to every man and every woman among you” – advice Christians from any time and place must heed in order to redress their lives upon the bedrock of the apostolic faith.

Further Readings


34 Catechisms for Those about to Be Enlightened, 4.9.
35 Catechisms for Those about to Be Enlightened, 4.7-15. The summary does not refer to the term “of one essence” and so does the entire, and lengthy, eleventh catechism.
36 Catechisms for Those about to Be Enlightened, 4.16-17.
37 Catechisms for Those about to Be Enlightened, 4.18-21.
38 Catechisms for Those about to Be Enlightened, 4.22-31.
39 Catechisms for Those about to Be Enlightened, 4.32.
40 Catechisms for Those about to Be Enlightened, 4.33-36.
41 Catechisms for Those about to Be Enlightened, 5.12.
42 Ibidem.
43 Catechisms for Those about to Be Enlightened; Procatechesis, 10-12, 15.