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# THE CREED OF THE ARMENIAN APOSTOLIC HOLY CHURCH ACCORDING TO ST. GRIGOR OF TAT'EV

Both Catholic and Orthodox Churches recite the Nicene or Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed during their worship services. What is a creed or creedal statement, and whence does the term “creed” derive?

A creed is a profession of faith, recited to proclaim one’s beliefs. The term “creed” originates from the Latin word “*credo*,” which means, “I believe.” Examining the term “creed,” Philip Schaff elaborates its definition and import: “A Creed, or Rule of Faith, or Symbol, is a confession of faith for public use, or a form of words setting forth with authority certain articles of belief, which are regarded by the framers as necessary for salvation, or at least for the well-being of the Christian Church”.<sup>1</sup>

The word of God, as written in the Holy Bible, reveals “the truth in the popular form of life and fact”.<sup>2</sup> The Creed, which states “the truth in the logical form of doctrine,” is the human answer to the word of God.<sup>3</sup> Schaff states that the Scripture is “to be believed and obeyed; the Creed is to be professed and taught”.<sup>4</sup>

1 Ph. Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, vol. I, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Mich. 1919, p. 3-4.

2 *Ibidem*, vol. II, p. 3.

3 *Ibidem*.

4 *Ibidem*.

The great creedal affirmations in the Holy Bible are reflections of the historic events in which God is believed to have revealed God's self to the world. Creeds and creedal statements are framed in human history and bear the marks of that history. Although creedal statements have been composed in various periods of history, they continue to be the basis of the dogmatic teachings of the Christian Church for subsequent eras.

The Armenian Apostolic Holy Church has developed several creedal statements through which the Church has kept and spread her teachings and dogmatic formulas among the Armenian people. "The Profession of the Orthodox Faith", composed by St. Grigor of Tat'ev (†1409), an Armenian church father, is one of the most famous creedal statements in the Armenian Church. Through his confession of the faith, St. Grigor makes the official teaching of the Armenian Church more understandable and acceptable to the Armenian Christians. Thus, faithful to the dogmatic formulas confirmed by the Armenian Orthodox church fathers, St. Grigor of Tat'ev's profession of the Christian faith interprets the orthodox beliefs of the Armenian Church.

## 1. *Biography of St. Grigor of Tat'ev*

St. Grigor of Tat'ev (baptismal name Khootlooshah) is one of the outstanding fathers in the history of the Armenian Apostolic Church.<sup>5</sup> He was born in

5 The origins of the Armenian Church date back to the apostolic era. There are many historical accounts that substantiate the existence of Christianity in Armenia before the advent of St. Gregory the Illuminator (†325). In other words, it was not St. Gregory the Illuminator who introduced Christianity into Armenia.

The Church historian, Eusebius Pamphilius (†339), Bishop of Cæsarea Palæstina, affirms the presence of the church in Armenia before St. Gregory. Eusebius mentions that Dionysius the Great, Pope of Alexandria (†265), wrote some epistles on repentance to the brethren of Egypt, to Conon, Bishop of Hermopolis, and “to those in Armenia, over whom Meruzanes was Bishop.” See Eusebius Pamphilius, *Ecclesiastical History (Books 6–10)*, The Fathers of the Church, vol. 29, translated by Roy J. Deferrari, Fathers of the Church Inc., New York 1955, p. 89. Meruzanes or Mehruzhan was the Bishop of Armenia between A.D. 230-260. See M. Ormanian, *The Church of Armenia*, St. Vartan Press, New York 1988, p. 230. The epistle of Dionysius to Mehruzhan is dated in A.D. 254. Certainly by Eusebius' time, then, there was a Christian church in Armenia that was in communion with the wider Church.

According to existing tradition of the Armenian Church, two Apostles, whose names, St. Thaddeus (or Judas, the son of James), and St. Bartholomew (or Nathanael), are mentioned in the canonical Gospels (see Matt. 10:3; Mark 3:19; Luke 6:16; John 1:43-51; 14:22-24), already had brought the light of Christ to the people of Armenia sometime during the first century A.D., after the ascension of the Lord.

Both Catholic and Orthodox traditions recognize St. Thaddeus and St. Bartholomew, as the founders of the Armenian Church. For instance, Pope John Paul II (†2005) confirmed this in a letter addressed to Karekin I (†1999), Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos (it is a later title given to the Bishop of Armenia) of All Armenians: “I have greatly desired to visit Armenia, where in the shadow of Mount Ararat the Christian faith has taken deep root and flourished. Brought by the Apostles Bartholomew and Thaddeus, and nourished also by the contribution of the Churches of Cappadocia, Edessa and Antioch, the Christian faith has shaped Armenian culture, just as Armenian culture has contributed to enriching the understanding of the Christian faith in new and unique ways.” See John Paul II, *May We Rediscover Our Full Communion*, “L'Osservatore Romano”, July 21/1999, p. 4.

However, the traditional date of the conversion of Armenia into Christianity is A.D. 301. See M. Ormanian, *The Church of Armenia*, op. cit. p. 10. This is when, according to the testimony of the fifth-century Armenian historian Agathangelos, St. Gregory the Illuminator converted the Armenian King Trdat the Great (†330), the royal family, other members of the nobility, the royal army, and indeed the entire nation, baptizing them in the River Aratsani on the right bank of the River Euphrates. See Agathangelos, *The Armenian History*, translated by Valerie Goekjian Zahirsky, St. Vartan Press, New York 1985, p. 43. Following his conversion, King Trdat proclaimed Christianity legal in Armenia. That is to say the King acclaimed Christianity as the official religion of the Kingdom of Armenia.

Salminius Hermias Sozomenus (†450), the next Church historian after Eusebius, testifies that the Armenians were the first Christian nation in the world. That is, it was in Armenia that Christianity first was recognized as the official religion of a nation: “The Armenians, I have understood, were the first to embrace Christianity. It is said, that Trdat, then the sovereign of that nation, became a Christian by means of a marvelous Divine sign which was wrought in his own house; and that he issued commands to all the subjects, by a herald, to adopt the same religion.” See Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History*, translated by Philip Schaff, Henry Wace *et alia*, revised by Chester D. Hartranft, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Mich. 1957, p. 282.

After the great conversion, the Armenian people, with the help and guidance of St. Gregory and St. Trdat, built the first Armenian Cathedral and Pontifical Seat, Holy Ejmiatsin, in A.D. 303. According to the testimony of Agathangelos, St. Gregory had a remarkable vision in which Jesus Christ, descending from heaven, struck with a golden hammer the place where the underground pagan Temple of Sandaramet (god of hell) was located, and where now stands the Mother See of Holy Ejmiatsin. Through this wondrous medium he signified the heaven-ordained foundation of the Armenian Church. See Agathan-

T'mok Amrots, in the region of Javakhk of the province of Gugark, Armenia in A.D. 1346. At the age of fourteen, he started his religious education at the University of the Tat'ev Monastery in Syunik, Armenia.<sup>6</sup>

He was ordained deacon by his spiritual father and teacher, St. Hovhan Votnetsi (†1386), dean of the Tat'ev University, at the chapel of the “Caves of Mane” on Mount Sepouh, which contained the tomb of St. Gregory the Illuminator.<sup>7</sup> He was given the name of Grigor in memory of the patron saint of Armenia, St. Gregory the Enlightener whose tomb they visited.

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gelos, *The Armenian History*, p. 34-35. The proper name *Ejmiatsin* consists of two words, *Ej* (“landing” or “descent”) and *Miatsin* (“the only Begotten”). Thus, the name of the Cathedral means “the place of the descent of the Only Begotten.”

The Holy See today still stands and serves as the headquarters of the Catholicate of All Armenians (Catholicate or Catholicossate is a title associated with the institution of the Catholicoi (the singular is Catholicos) of the Armenian Church).

6 Grigor of Tat'ev, *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, introduction and commentary on the literary sources by Ghukas Zakaryan, St. Ejmiatsin Press, Vagharshapat 2005, p. 7–8. Hovhannes Ayvazyan *et alia*, eds., *Christonya Hayastan Hanragitaran, Encyclopedia of Christian Armenia*, Armenian Encyclopedia Press, Yerevan 2002, p. 247-250.

7 St. Gregory the Illuminator, who was not an Armenian but a Parthian by origin, has been called “Illuminator” or “Enlightener of Armenia” because “he arose for us as a true dawn, a spiritual sun and divine ray, an escape from the profound evil of idolatry, the source of blessing and spiritual prosperity, truly a divine palm tree planted in the house of the Lord and flourishing in the courts of our God [cf. Ps. 91:13-14]. He increased [the number of the faithful] among such and so many peoples and gathered us to an old age of spiritual wealth [cf. Ps. 91:15] for the glory and praise of God [cf. Phil. 1:11].” See Moses Khorenatsi, *History of the Armenians*, translation and commentary on the literary sources by Robert W. Thomson, Harvard University Press, Cambridge 1978, p. 250. Ghazar Parpetsi, a fifth-sixth century Armenian Church historian and chronicler, even equates the person of St. Gregory with the twelve Apostles: “Grant us through the intercession of the illuminating Apostles and through the labors of the holy martyr Gregory, their equal and coworker, forgiveness for our sins”. See Ghazar Parpetsi, *Patmutiun Hayots, History of the Armenians*, translated and edited by G. Ter-Mkrtchian and S. Malkhasean, Martiroseants Press, Tiflis, Georgia 1904, p. 62.

St. Gregory the Illuminator, “our Father and parent in the Gospel” who “sat on the throne of the holy apostle Thaddaeus” in A.D. 302, was the first officially Patriarch of the Armenian Church until his death of A.D. 325: “After illuminating Armenia with the light of divine knowledge, banishing the darkness of idolatry and filled all regions with Bishops and teachers, in his love for the mountains and solitude and a secluded life with tranquility of mind to speak to God without distraction, he [St. Gregory] left his own son Aristakes as his successor and remained himself in the province of Daranalik in the mountain ‘Caves of Mane.’” See Moses Khorenatsi, *History of the Armenians*, op. cit., p. 248. According to tradition, “there was a certain woman, Mane by name, among the companions of Saint Rhipsime [a nun who escaped from Rome to Armenia and was martyred with her companions by the Armenian King Trdat the Great in about A.D. 290], like Nune, the teacher of Georgians, who made no haste to follow them when they came among us; but knowing that all places are God’s, she dwelt in these mountains in some caves in the rock. For this reason the mountain was named ‘Caves of Mane,’ and in that cave later dwelt Saint Gregory.” See Moses Khorenatsi, *History of the Armenians*, op. cit., p. 248.

At the beginning of A.D. 1370, together with St. Hovhan Vorotnetsi, St. Grigor went on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Not only St. Grigor expended his knowledge in the theology of the Armenian Church in Jerusalem, but he also received great experience in the monastic life of the Armenian Church in the Holy Land.

St. Grigor was ordained a celibate priest at the St. James Armenian Monastery of Jerusalem in A.D. 1373.<sup>8</sup> Some years later, the ecclesiastical degree of *Vardapet* was granted to him in Yerznka.<sup>9</sup> Finally, he achieved the rank of *Tsayraguyn Vardapet*, which was conferred upon him at the Aprakunis Monastery in Nakhijevan.<sup>10</sup>

St. Hovhan Vorotnetsi died on January 13, 1388. His disciples asked St. Grigor to accept the position of dean of the University of Tat'ev Monastery and of the theological school of St. Karapet Monastery of Aprakunis,<sup>11</sup> and he agreed. The monks spoke of him as “the sun that never sets”, “a second Grigor the Enlightener”, “the teacher of all Armenians”, and “higher (in wisdom and knowledge) than all the philosophers and teachers, ancient and modern”.<sup>12</sup>

St. Grigor stayed at the Aprakunis Monastery for two years. In A.D. 1390, with some of his students, he moved to the Tat'ev Monastery.<sup>13</sup> Although he lived there for the rest of life, he also taught at the theological schools of Metsopavank and Saghmosavank Monasteries.

During his stay at the Monastery of Tat'ev (1390–1409), St. Grigor gathered students from different regions of Armenia. He had around three hundred students – sixty of them clergy – who became theologians, manuscript writers and copyists, philologists, philosophers, musicians, and artists. They played a notable role in the scientific, spiritual, and cultural life of Armenia.

8 There are both secular-married and celibate-unmarried priests in the Armenian Apostolic Church. According to tradition, the candidate for the secular priesthood should be married and have a child before his ordination. St. Grigor was not married, so he was ordained as a celibate priest in the Armenian Church.

9 Vardapet or Archimandrite is a highly educated preaching monk in the Armenian Apostolic Church. Vardapet is also an academic rank in the Armenian Church equivalent to doctorate of theology. The greatest and best known of the doctor-monks of the Armenian Church has been St. Grigor of Tat'ev.

10 Tsayraguyn Vardapet or Senior Archimandrite is a teacher of teachers in the Armenian Church. To be a teacher of teachers was an exceptional achievement. It required many more years of study. It was more difficult to be a Tsayraguyn Vardapet than a Bishop; and many Bishops who were also Tsayraguyn Vardapet would add the latter title to their signature.

11 Together with his teacher, St. Hovhan Vorotnetsi, St. Grigor was the supporting-founder of the Aprakunis Monastery.

12 Hagop Nersoyan, *Stories from the History of the Armenian Church*, Council for Religious Education, New York 1963, p. 147.

13 Some of his students stayed at the Aprakunis Monastery in order to keep opened the doors of its religious school.

In the fourteenth to fifteenth centuries, in contrast with the difficult social-political and economic situation in most of Armenia, the University of Tat'ev flourished and became one of the most important centers of Armenian art, literature, history, and science. Under the guidance and leadership of St. Grigor, the University of Tat'ev became “the second Athens” and “a center of wisdom”.

St. Grigor and his students made the University a prominent school of spiritual life and culture, defending the orthodox theology of the Armenian Church against the Unitors who had come to Armenia with a special apostolic-homiletic mission.<sup>14</sup>

St. Grigor was also a great reformer of the Armenian Church. He prepared an academic system for granting doctoral ranks in theology in the Armenian Church. He improved the methods of homiletics in the Armenian Church.

He also developed and enriched the theological and philosophical inheritance of his famous teacher, St. Hovhan Vorotnetsi, and of other great predecessors, such as Davit Anhaght (fifth–sixth century), Grigor Magistros Pahlavuni (†1058), Hovhannes Sarkavag (†1129), Vahram Rabuni (thirteenth century), in a more systematic way. He clearly differentiated the subject and questions of philosophical research (natural analysis) from those of theological ones (theory of faith). In his view, theology and philosophy are two independent aspects of the truth.

Like Thomas Aquinas (†1274), St. Grigor argued that God's existence can be proved not only by faith but also by reason. Many of his arguments are analogous to those suggested in Thomas Aquinas' *Summa Theologica*.

Thus St. Grigor was and remains one of the greatest theologians and church fathers of the Armenian Apostolic Church. He was a prominent theologian, rhetor, philosopher, and philologist. He died on December 27, 1409, on the Feast of St. Stephen the Protodeacon. He was buried in the Tat'ev Monastery.

## ***2. St. Grigor's works and Creed***

St. Grigor was very well known not only for his saintly behavior, effective preaching, and teaching, but also for the rich bibliographical inheritance he left for the generations. His works are encyclopedic in nature and have scientific depth. They occupy a significant place in the Armenian theological and philosophical thinking.

14 During the crusades, a movement started in Armenia that tried to achieve the unification of the Armenian Church with the Roman Catholic Church. Although some clergy from Rome went to Armenia for evangelization among the Armenians, they did not succeed in unifying the Armenian Church with the Roman Church. These missionaries were called Unitors or Unitorians, and their teaching as Unitorianism.

Some of his books, particularly his *Girk vor Kochi Voskeporik* (*Book Called Miscellany*), and *Girk Hartsnants* (*Book of Questions*) have exceptional importance for research on the development of doctrines of the Armenian Church. The *Book Called Miscellany* was written for the Armenian faithful who he wanted to be acquainted with the basics of the theology and doctrines of the Armenian Church.

St. Grigor's masterpiece, the *Book of Questions*, introduces readers the teachings and dogmatic formulations of the Armenian Church. Although the beginning of the book is devoted to the thinkers of Western philosophy, natural theologians, Jews, and the heretics that were anathematized by the universal Church during the first three Ecumenical Councils,<sup>15</sup> it is a theological-doctrinal textbook written in the scholastic manner of that time, in the form of question and answer. In this book, he examines all the contemporary problems of Christian doctrines.<sup>16</sup> St. Grigor concluded his book with the "Treatise against the Muslims".

Since St. Grigor of Tat'ev knew Latin very well, he was familiar with the works of such Catholic scholastic theologians as Albertus Magnus (†1280) and

15 The Armenian Apostolic Church, together with all Oriental Orthodox Coptic, Ethiopian, Syrian (Jacobite) Churches, and the Malabar Malankara Church of India, has acknowledged the first three Ecumenical Councils, namely, the First Council of Nicaea (325), the First Council of Constantinople (381), and the Council of Ephesus (431).

16 The *Book of Questions* examines the doctrinal teachings of the Armenian Church in relation to the hypostases of the Godhead, creation, sin, incarnation, resurrection, redemption, ascension, Pentecost, Ecclesiology, and Eschatology. Synthesizing the teachings of the Armenian Church fathers, and attributing all the activities of the human soul to God, St. Grigor of Tat'ev states that human's body and soul are born at the same time. As to how that takes place, St. Grigor thus explains, "The beginning of the human existence in us is the same as the birth of the seed. For it is the beginning of the formation of our bodies and the birth of our soul. And as to how? One must say that in the spermal existence there are two visible substances: the bodily material and the influence of the creative divine order, saying "Be fruitful and multiply" (Gen 1:28). Thus the bodily existence is from matter and that of the soul from God's command. As such one and the same is the beginning of the body and soul.... The soul is not created later in time or in nature, rather it is later in class and order. For, the power forming the matter, being influenced by the order of the Creator, first prepares and creates the substance to receive what would be planted in it. Then, the rational is created followed by the intellect, which God initiates. This does not happen in a later time, for three reasons. First, the specific matter has with it the natural livelihood what is to be planted in it, and the planted is similar to the rational and the rational to the natural. These are not disconnected from the rest, for in existence they are one in the human being, although they are different in their energies (effects). Second, the matter of the body contains in it the soul first in power then in energy.... Third, it is apparent also that the soul appears at the same time that the matter is being formed. For when the matter is imperfect only the feeding is obvious in it. When the rational is formed, breath appears in it. And when the appearance of a human is shaped, with God's care, the natural soul is revealed in it. It is this organizing power that first prepares the matter for life, then for rationality and finally for intellectuality" (Grigor of Tat'ev, *Girk Hartsnants. Book of Questions*, St. James Press, Jerusalem 1993, p. 254-255. Thus, according to St. Grigor of Tat'ev, the human body and soul are created at the same time. Meanwhile, the energies of the soul are initiated phase-by-phase according to the development of the body's matter.

Thomas Aquinas. Familiarizing himself with the scholastic traditions of the West, St. Grigor used scholastic methods in his works to combat Unitarianism.

The two-volume book *Girk Karozutean (Book of Sermons)* contains not only St. Grigor's sermons and lectures, but also works of some other prominent authors to whom he often refers.<sup>17</sup>

St. Grigor also wrote scriptural commentaries on the Poetical and Wisdom books, including the Wisdom of Solomon, the book of Isaiah, the four gospels, and a commentary on the letters of St. Cyril of Alexandria. St. Grigor has concise analyses on the writings of great philosophers such as Aristotle (†322 B.C.), Porphyry (†309 B.C.), and Davit Anhaght (fifth century A.D.).<sup>18</sup>

Probably St. Grigor's most important legacy was his "Profession of the Orthodox Faith" which is incorporated in the "Most High Holy Rites of the Armenian Church".<sup>19</sup> Composed in the Tat'ev University and dated in 1390's, this creedal

17 The first volume of the *Book of Sermons* includes a hundred and forty-eight homilies on Feasts starting from Christmas to Pentecost. See Grigor of Tat'ev, *Dzmerran Hator, Winter Volume*, St. James Press, Jerusalem 1998. The second volume has a hundred and sixty homilies for the rest of the Liturgical year. See Grigor of Tat'ev, *Amarran Hator, Summer Volume*, St. James Press, Jerusalem 1998. The subjects of the *Book of Sermons* are topics such as Prayer, Grace, Hope, Faith, Love, Repentance, Salvation, Church, Priesthood, Sacraments, Lent, Feasts, Saints, Sins, and Virtues. For St. Grigor, faith, hope, and love are the greatest virtues that God has granted to humans. He mentioned that "through faith we know and accept God; through hope we walk to God, and through love we are united with and in God."

18 Davit Anhaght ("Davit the Invincible") was a great Armenian philosopher in the fifth century A.D.

19 The Armenian Apostolic Church has adopted three creedal statements for her offices (see Appendices). The so-called Nicene Creed, which Fr. Yovsep Gaterchian, an Armenian Catholic priest, designates as *Nicene-Athanasian* (see Fr. Yovsep Gaterchian, *Hanganak Havatoy vorov vari Hayastanyayts Yekghetsi, Symbol of Faith professed in the Armenian Church*, Mekhitarist Press, Vienna 1891, p. 37), is recited during the Divine Liturgy and on other appropriate occasions. See *The Divine Liturgy of the Armenian Church*, authorized by the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern), St. Vartan Press, New York 1999), p. 18-19.

When St. Gregory received the Creed of the first Ecumenical Council of Nicaea from his younger son, St. Aristakes, who represented the Armenian Church at that Council, he, by the following doxology, beautifully abridged the Nicene Creed for the Armenian people: "As for us, we shall glorify Him Who was before the ages, worshipping the Holy Trinity, and the one Godhead, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and always and unto the ages of ages. Amen". The celebrant priest recites the Doxology of St. Gregory after the Anathema of the Nicene Creed during the Divine Liturgy in the Armenian Church. See *The Divine Liturgy of the Armenian Church*, op. cit., 19.

There is another somewhat longer Creed known as St. Grigor of Tat'ev's Creed; see *Mets Mashtots, The Most High Holy Rites of the Armenian Church*, authorized by the Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople, Poghos Yohannissian Publishing Company, Constantinople 1807, p. 261; and *The Book of Hours of the Armenian Church*, authorized by the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem, St. James Press, Jerusalem 1985, p. 5-8.

Finally, the third Creed, which is the shortest one, is formally recited during the sacrament of baptism in the Armenian Church; see "Rite of Baptism," *Mashtots. Holy Rites of the Armenian Church*, authorized by the Catholicate of All Armenians, St. Ejmiatsin Press, Vagharshapat 2001, p. 25.

statement is an interpretation of the symbol of the first three Ecumenical Councils.<sup>20</sup> Hence the Creed of St. Grigor of Tat'ev makes the dogmatic formulations of three Ecumenical Councils more accessible to the Armenian faithful.

### ***3. Translation of the Creed of St. Grigor of Tat'ev***

We confess and believe, with all our heart, in God the Father, the uncreated, unbegotten, and without beginning; who also is the generator of the Son and the originator of the Holy Spirit.

We believe in God the Word, the uncreated, begotten and arising from the Father before all ages, neither subsequent nor preceding; but as much as the Father is Father, and the Son is Son with Him.

We believe in God the Holy Spirit, the uncreated and timeless, not begotten but springing from the Father; consubstantial with the Father, and co-glorified with the Son.

We believe in the Holy Trinity, one in nature and one in Godhead; not three gods, but one God with one will, one kingdom, one rule; the Creator of things visible and invisible.

<sup>20</sup> The declarations and dogmatic formulations of the first three Ecumenical Councils are the basis of the theological thought of the Armenian Church, while the Christology of the Armenian Church is based on the teachings of the Cyrilian or Alexandrian school.

The Armenian Church, with all the Oriental Orthodox Churches, believes in the *one nature united or united, one nature* of God the Word Incarnate identified with the Ephesian dogmatic formula, taught by St. Cyril of Alexandria – *one nature of God the Word Incarnate* or *one incarnate nature of God the Word* (the teaching of St. Cyril is declared in his famous formula – *Mia Physis Tou Theou Logou Sesarkomene*. For St. Cyril, Jesus Christ has one incarnate nature composed of two different natures, namely divine and human).

Unfortunately, both Chalcedonian Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches have recognized the Oriental Orthodox family of churches as “Monophysite.” In the Greek language, the word “*mono*” means “one” in the sense of “one only; a single; entirely alone”; see G. W. H. Lampe, ed., *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1961, p. 883. The word *mia* is translated as “one; in contrast to more than one” (in opposition to many, to division into parts); see Johannes P. Louw, and Eugene A. Nida, eds., *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, vol. 1, United Bible Societies, New York 1989, p. 605. Thus, *mono* refers to a singular one, while *mia* refers to a compound one. Hence, it is erroneous to classify the Armenian Church and the other Oriental Orthodox Churches as “Monophysite.” That term does not express the import of their Christology. Rather, the Oriental Orthodox family of churches is more correctly understood as “Miaphysite.” The Armenian Church has condemned both Monophysitism (as a heresy taught by Eutyches), as well as the Duophysitism of Nestorius. The Armenian Church has recognized Christ’s one incarnate nature out of two different natures, divinity and humanity.

Thus, the ascription of *united, one nature* to God the Word Incarnate occurs in the creedal statement professed by the candidates for ordination into priesthood in the Armenian Church, and in the proclamation of the orthodox faith of the Armenian Church recited prior to the Night Prayer (the Canonical Hours of the Armenian Apostolic Church has Nine Prayer Services: Night Prayer, Morning Prayer, Sunrise Prayer, Third Hour Prayer, Sixth Hour Prayer, Ninth Hour Prayer, Evening Prayer, Peace Prayer, and Rest Prayer).

We believe in the Holy Church; in the forgiveness of sins through the intercession of the saints.

We believe in God the Word, who is one of the three persons, generated from the Father before all ages. In time, He descended into the Theotokos, the Virgin Mary, took blood from her and united it with His divinity. He restrained Himself for nine months in the womb of the immaculate Virgin, and the perfect God was made perfect human in soul, mind, and body; one person, one hypostasis, and united, one nature. God became human without change and alteration. His conception was without semen; and [it] was an untainted birth. Just as there is no beginning to His divinity, there is no end to His humanity, for “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever”.

We believe in our Lord Jesus Christ who walked on the earth. After age thirty He came to be baptized. The Father witnessed from above, “This is my beloved Son”, and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him like a dove. He was tempted by Satan and conquered him. He preached salvation to humankind. He labored, and was fatigued, became hungry and thirsty in the flesh. Then he willingly accepted suffering, was crucified and died in the flesh, but was alive in the divinity. The body, united with the divinity, was laid in the tomb; and with the soul, [which was] inseparable from the divinity, He descended into hell. [There] He preached to the souls, destroyed hell and freed the souls. After three days, He rose from the dead and appeared to Disciples.

We believe in our Lord Jesus Christ Who ascended into heaven with the same body and was seated at the right hand of the Father. He shall come again with the same body and with the glory of the Father to judge the living and the dead at the Resurrection of all humankind.

We also believe in the reward of deeds; everlasting life for the righteous, and everlasting suffering for the sinful.

### ***3.1 The Structure and Content of St. Grigor’s Creed***

Generally speaking, articles that discuss and elaborate on the theology of the three Persons of the Holy Trinity, Creation, Ecclesiology, Christology, and Eschatology occupy a central place in the theology of the Creed of St. Grigor of

Tat'ev, similar to the Apostles'<sup>21</sup> and Nicene<sup>22</sup> Creeds. However, unlike these earlier creeds, St. Grigor's Creed focuses on the second Person of the Trinity, Christ. It is obvious that St. Grigor allocates much more space in his creedal statement to Christology. By doing so, St. Grigor clearly emphasizes the specific details of the Armenian Church's dogmatic teachings concerning Christology.

Furthermore, St. Grigor changes the order of the articles of faith in his Creed. A careful comparison of his Creed with the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds shows that St. Grigor shifted the positions of articles dealing with Christological themes. Unlike the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds, the Creed of St. Grigor climaxes with

21 "The creed is first mentioned by name (*symbolum apostolorum*) in the fourth century in a letter from the synod of Milan (attributed to St. Ambrose) to Pope Siricius." See J. Pelikan and V. Hotchkiss, eds., *Creeds and Confessions of Faith in the Christian Tradition*, vol. I, Yale University Press, New Haven 2003, p. 667.

The Apostles' Creed comes down to us through the *Commentarius in Symbolum Apostolorum*. See Rufinus, *A Commentary on the Apostles' Creed*, translated and annotated by J. N. D. Kelly, Newman Press, Westminster, Md. 1954. Ecclesiastical tradition claims that the Apostles' Creed is a product of the combined effort of Christ's twelve apostles who, on Pentecost, "assembled in one spot and, being filled with the Holy Spirit, drafted this short summary, as I have explained, of their future preaching, each contributing the clause he judged fitting." See Rufinus, *A Commentary on the Apostles' Creed*, op. cit., p. 29-30.

Tyrannius Rufinus of Aquileia (†411) writes that the apostles "decreed that it should be handed out as standard teaching to converts". See *ibidem*, p. 30. Augustine of Hippo (†430) follows Rufinus in claiming that each apostle contributed one sentence to compose this first formal Creed of the Christian Church. He commented on the Apostles' Creed in his sermon to the catechumens (*De Symbolo ad Catechumenos*) and in his *Faith and the Creed (De Fide et Symbolo)*. See Augustine, *Treatises on Marriage and Other Subjects*, The Fathers of the Church, vol. 27, edited by Roy J. Deferrari, Fathers of the Church Inc., New York 1955, p. 289-345.

However, Philip Schaff explains that the Apostles' Creed is not a product of an individual author, but rather the "product of the Western Catholic Church (as the Nicene Creed is that of the Eastern Church) within the first four centuries." See Ph. Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, vol. I, op. cit., p. 16.

The text of the Apostles' Creed reads: "I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; He went down to the dead (*ad inferna*). On the third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended to the heavens, and is seated at the right hand of God, the Father almighty, wherefrom He shall come again to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting." See J. Neuner and J. Dupuis, eds., *The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church*, translated by J. Neuner and J. Dupuis *et alia*, Alba House, New York 1982, p. 5.

22 The text of the Creed of the first Ecumenical Council of Nicaea reads: "We believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of all things, visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Only-begotten generated from the Father, that is, from the being (*ousia*) of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from God, begotten, not made, one in being (*homoousios*) with the Father, through whom all things were made, those in heaven and those on earth. For us men and for our salvation He came down, and became flesh, was made man, suffered, and rose again on the third day. He ascended to the heavens and shall come again to judge the living and the dead. And in the Holy Spirit". See *ibidem*, p. 6.

the Christological articles. The articles pertaining to Eschatology and the Day of Judgment (relating as they do to the function, ministry and role of Jesus Christ) are inserted at the conclusion of the Creed as natural consequences of the Christology.

Following St. Paul's exhortation (*cf.* Rom. 10:9-10), St. Grigor encourages the faithful of the Armenian Church, through the path of confession and faith, wholeheartedly to accept all the articles of his Creed. Thus, he starts his Creed with the following statement: "We confess and believe, with all our heart..."

It is very interesting that St. Grigor does not begin by discussing God as the almighty One. Rather, he confesses God to be the Father, the uncreated and unbegotten. God the Father is the One from whom the Son is begotten and the Holy Spirit proceeds. Following this statement, St. Grigor begins his detailed affirmations concerning the three Persons of the Holy Trinity and their unique characteristics.

St. Grigor continues by emphasizing the unity of the divinity and nature of the three Persons of the Holy Trinity. They are not three gods but one God with one will, one kingdom, and one rule. Here also St. Grigor's Creed differs from the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds in that, rather than putting the articles discussing creation at the beginning, St. Grigor addresses creation only after the articles discussing the three Persons of the Holy Trinity.

St. Grigor does not specifically mention the mission and universality of the church two "notes" of the one Church of Christ. However, given his context as a teacher and theologian in the Church, it is obvious that the universal and apostolic Church of Christ is what he discusses in his Creed. The Church is where the followers of Christ receive the forgiveness of their sins. Through the intercession of the saints, the militant church joins the victorious church, becoming one in a community that transcends time.

The Christology of St. Grigor proceeds from the Cyrilian formula accepted by the Armenian Church, "One is the nature of the Word of God Incarnate." This in St. Grigor's Creed receives a different form, "United, one nature," although without contradicting or deviating from the Christology of St. Cyril of Alexandria.<sup>23</sup>

St. Grigor divides the Christological article of his Creed into two sections: conception and birth. Discussing the first, he reflects upon the immaculate conception of Jesus Christ by the Virgin Mary through the Holy Spirit and without human seed. That is to say, the birth of Jesus Christ was without a man's intervention by his seed. This adds a unique characteristic to the Creed of St. Grigor.

The second part of the Christological article in St. Grigor’s Creed focuses on the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ and the mysteries established through His ministry. Here, St. Grigor’s main source is the Bible. Directly or indirectly, he emphasizes the voluntary, and not imposed, acts of Christ, including his suffering, crucifixion and death, which are followed by the resurrection and ascension to the Father.

The final article in St. Grigor’s Creed concerns eschatology. Jesus Christ, with the same body and the glory of God the Father shall come again. At that time, human works will be judged and appropriately recompensed, “eternal life for those who are righteous and eternal suffering for the sinners”.

Thus the Creed of St. Grigor of Tat’ev, which is divided into nine sections or articles, presents a concise summary of the confession of orthodox faith, theology and specifically the Christology of the Armenian Church.

### ***3.2 Biblical References and Sources***

As mentioned earlier, St. Grigor incorporates in his Creed direct and indirect quotations from the books of the Bible. The first biblical reference concerns faith and confession. Starting his Creed with the phrase “we confess and believe”, St. Grigor is indirectly quoting the Apostle Paul’s statement in the letter to the Romans where he says: “If you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from dead, you will be saved; for one believes with the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth is so saved” (Rom. 10:9-10).

Needless to say there are many other passages in the books of the Bible whose authors encourage their readers to accept and believe in God and Christ through faith and confession.<sup>24</sup>

St. Grigor calls upon the faithful Armenians to confess their faith “all-heartedly.” This is an allusion to the *Shema* in Deuteronomy 6:5: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might”. This sentiment is reaffirmed in Mark 12:30, which reports the *Shema* as part of the teaching of Jesus: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength”. Obviously there are many other references in the Bible to confessing one’s faith from the heart.<sup>25</sup>

24 Cf. 1 Kings 8:33, 35; 2 Chron. 6:24, 26; Ezra 10:11; Dan. 9:4; Rom. 14:11; Phil. 2:11; 2 Tim. 2:19; Heb. 3:1; 13:15.

25 Cf. Deut. 4:29; 10:12; 11:13; 13:3; 26:16; 30:2, 6, 10; Josh. 22:5; 1 Sam. 7:3; 12:20, 24; 1 Kings 2:4; 8:48; 14:8; 2 Kings 10:31; 23:3, 25; 2 Chron. 6:38; 15:12; 22:9; 34:31; Ps. 9:1; 86:12; 111:1; 119:2, 10, 34, 58, 69, 145; 138:1; Prov. 3:5; 4:4; Jer. 24:7; 29:13; Joel 2:12; Zeph. 3:14; Matt. 22:37; Luke 10:27; Acts 11:23; Col. 3:23.

While it is true that the concept of the Fatherhood of God is discussed in certain books of the Old Testament,<sup>26</sup> the concept finds its fulfillment in the New Testament where Jesus Christ addresses God as “Father” and exhorts His followers also to call God “Father” as He does in the Lord’s Prayer.<sup>27</sup> Another prayer in the Divine Liturgy of the Armenian Church elaborates on the concept of God’s Fatherhood saying, “God of truth and Father of mercy, we thank You, who have exalted our nature, condemned as we were, above that of the blessed patriarchs; for You were called God to them, whereas in comparison You have been pleased to be named Father to us”.<sup>28</sup>

The statement about the uncreated essence of God and God’s eternal being also is borrowed from the Bible. St. Grigor’s statement regarding this doctrine is based on a phrase from the Book of Daniel where God is depicted as the “Ancient of Days”.<sup>29</sup> The biblical teaching of God being the Father of the Son,<sup>30</sup> and the source of the Holy Spirit,<sup>31</sup> is indirectly emphasized in St. Grigor’s Creed.

In commenting about the Word of God, St. Grigor uses the Gospel According to John as the foundation of his elaborations on the Word’s being uncreated and consubstantial with the Father, while at the same time being born of the Father.<sup>32</sup> The Evangelist Luke elaborates on the eternal divine being of the Holy Spirit.<sup>33</sup> Differentiating the Holy Spirit from the Word of God, St. Grigor emphasizes that the latter proceeds from the Father and unlike the Son is not born of the Father.<sup>34</sup> However, similar to the Son, the Holy Spirit is also consubstantial with the Father. The Holy Spirit is glorified with the Father and the Son.<sup>35</sup> The article confessing the Holy Trinity of God emanates from the Gospel According to Matthew,<sup>36</sup> while the creative nature of the Holy Trinity is based on the teachings in the Book of Genesis.<sup>37</sup>

The phrase “Holy Church” is borrowed from St. Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians.<sup>38</sup> The article discussing the forgiveness of sins by Christ through the church

26 Cf. Ps. 68:5; 89:26; Is. 63:16.

27 Cf. Matt. 6:9-13.

28 See *The Divine Liturgy of the Armenian Church*, op. cit., p.40.

29 Cf. Is. 43:13; Dan. 7:9-22.

30 Cf. Ps. 2:7; Heb. 1:5.

31 Cf. John 15:26.

32 Cf. John 1:18; 6:46; 10:30; 16:28.

33 Cf. Acts 5:3-4.

34 Cf. John 15:26.

35 Cf. John 14:16-26; Rom. 8:11; 1 Cor. 12:4-6; 2 Cor. 3:17.

36 Cf. Matt. 28:19.

37 Cf. Gen. 1:1-3; 14:22.

38 Cf. Eph. 1:22-23.

is an indirect quotation of verses in several books of the Bible.<sup>39</sup> The article regarding the intercession of the saints is mainly from the Book of Revelation, where the author of the book graphically describes the prayers of the saints.<sup>40</sup>

The Word of God, the second Person of the Holy Trinity, is the eternal Son of the Father.<sup>41</sup> However, in the fullness of the time He is born of the Virgin Mary. Receiving flesh from her, He united it with His divinity.<sup>42</sup> Remaining in the Holy Virgin's womb for nine months, the perfect God becomes a perfect human, in mind, body, and soul.<sup>43</sup> Here, St. Grigor is indirectly quoting the following famous statement of St. Cyril of Alexandria "One is the nature of the Incarnate Word of God," thus confessing the unified, one nature of the Word of God, following His incarnation. The Gospel According to Luke attests the immaculate birth of Jesus Christ.<sup>44</sup> Since the divinity of Christ is eternal and has no beginning, being born of the Father,<sup>45</sup> it is true to say with the author of the Letter to the Hebrews, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever".<sup>46</sup>

St. Grigor's statement concerning the mysteries in the life of Christ is formulated basically as a *catena* of direct and indirect quotations of verses from certain books of the New Testament. St. Grigor focuses on events in the earthly life of Christ: His baptism; His temptation by, and victory over, the devil; His preaching, healings, bodily hunger and thirst, and voluntary acceptance of suffering.<sup>47</sup>

The next article concerns Christ's bodily death while remaining alive in His divinity.<sup>48</sup> Christ's body, remaining unified with His divinity, was laid in the tomb. With His rational soul, which is inseparable from His divinity, Christ descended to hell where He preached to the souls and granted them freedom.<sup>49</sup> St. Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians is the foundation of the article concerning resurrection.<sup>50</sup>

The article following the one discussing Christ's resurrection focuses on the ascension. The Creed of St. Grigor reiterates the biblical teaching that, forty

39 Cf. Luke 24:47; John 20:22-23; 1 John 1:9.

40 Cf. Rev. 5:8.

41 Cf. John 1:1-2.

42 Cf. Gal. 4:4.

43 Cf. 1 Thess. 5:23.

44 See Luke 1:35. This is indirectly affirmed by Isaiah 7:14.

45 Cf. Rev. 1:8; 22:13.

46 Heb. 13:8.

47 Cf. Mark 1:9; Matt. 3:17; Luke 3:22; 4:1-15; John 19:28.

48 Cf. Acts 2:31; 1 Pet. 3:18.

49 Cf. 1 Pet. 3:18-19.

50 Cf. 1 Cor. 15:4-8.

days after His resurrection, the Son of God ascended to the Father with the same body and is seated at the Father's right hand.<sup>51</sup>

At the conclusion of the Creed, St. Grigor emphasizes the Second Coming of Christ in the same body and the glory of the Father. Attestations to this teaching are found in several of the New Testament books.<sup>52</sup> At this Second Coming, the Son of God will function as the judge of the living and the dead, and will reward all according to their deeds, "everlasting life for the righteous, and everlasting suffering for the sinful".<sup>53</sup>

Thus we see St. Grigor's thorough-going dependence on the Bible throughout the articles of his Creed. Numerous are the direct and indirect quotations from the verses and passages of the books of the Bible. Incorporating these verses and commenting on them, St. Grigor has enriched the text of his Creed. By doing so, he simplified the language of the Creed so it would be more easily comprehensible to the faithful of the Armenian Church.

### ***3.3 The Theology of St. Grigor's Creed***

The starting point in St. Grigor's theology is God the Father, the first Person of the Holy Trinity. The Father is uncreated, unbegotten, and without beginning. God the Father derives God's being from no one and no thing. The Father is neither created nor begotten. Rather, the Father begets the Son and proceeds to the Holy Spirit. Hence, the Father is the beginning or the source for the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Like the Father, the Word also is God and uncreated. God the Word is begotten and arises from the Father before all ages. The Word is the Son of the Father. There is no subordination between the Father and the Son. They are equal in one nature and essence. The Son derives His being from the Father not by creation but by generation. That is to say, the Son is not begotten from the Father in time. Rather the Son is eternally born from the Father. The Son is not before or after, greater or less than the Father, for there is neither subsequence nor precedence in eternity. Rather inasmuch as the Father is Father, the Son is Son with His Father.

The Holy Spirit likewise is God. Like the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit is uncreated and timeless. The Spirit is neither made nor begotten but proceeds from the Father. The Holy Spirit derives the Spirit's being from the Father not by creation nor by generation, but by procession. Basing his articles on the teachings of the Armenian Church, St. Grigor emphasizes that the Son is born from the Father, while the Holy

51 Cf. Mark 16:19; Luke 24:51; Acts 1:9; 7:55-56; 1 Pet. 3:22.

52 Cf. Matt. 16:27; Acts 1:11; 1 Cor. 15:52.

53 Cf. Matt. 16:27; 25:46; Rev. 22:12.

Spirit proceeds from the Father alone and not the Father and the Son.<sup>54</sup> The Holy Spirit is *homoousion* or consubstantial with the Father, and is co-worshiped and co-glorified with the Son.

In his Creed, St. Grigor strongly affirms the one nature of the three hypostases in the one Godhead. They are not three gods, but one God with one will, one kingdom, and one rule or authority. In this statement St. Grigor very clearly indicates that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit have one and the same nature. They are co-equal in the one Godhead that is the Creator of the entire universe.

The fundamental idea is that the faithful of the Armenian Church worship one Godhead in Trinity, and the Trinity in one Godhead. This truly is a mystery. We will never understand how the three Persons of the Godhead can be in union in the Trinity and yet not violate the oneness of the substance of the one Godhead.

The affirmation of St. Grigor of the Holy Trinity in one nature and one Godhead is remarkable. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, while distinct Persons and hypostases, are one and the same Godhead. They have exactly the same essence, nature, glory, and majesty, but various properties. The particular property of the Father is that He is not begotten or generated. The particularity of the Son is that He is begotten. The particular property of the Holy Spirit is that the Spirit proceeds. Hence, the Father is the generator of the Son and the originator of the Holy Spirit.

St. Grigor does not reflect upon ecclesiology in detail, but confesses his belief in the Holy Church. The Church is Holy because the head of the Church, Jesus the Christ, is Holy.<sup>55</sup> It should be noted that St. Grigor talks about the forgiveness of sins only after he professes his belief in the Church. In this way he states that sins can be forgiven only in the Church, through the intercession of saints, where the earthly and heavenly, visible and invisible churches of Christ are united and become one in Christ.

In his Creed, St. Grigor also reflects upon Mariology, for St. Mary is the Mother of the Incarnate Word of God. St. Mary is a Virgin who, in time, gave birth to the Son of God. The Son of God has a twofold generation, before all ages from His Father and in time from the Holy Virgin. The Son of God becomes human from His Mother's substance. Perfect God becomes perfect human in rational soul, mind, and body. St. Grigor confesses the Blessed Virgin as Theotokos, for she gave birth to the Son of the Most High, Jesus the Christ. Thus the Incarnate Word of God, who is coequal to God

54 For the Armenian Church's position on this issue see Karekin I, *Hay Yekeghetsvo Astvatsabanuti-une est Hay Sharakanneru, The Theology of the Armenian Church according to her Hymns*, edited by V. Ghukasian, Canada 2003, p. 241-248.

55 Cf. Eph. 5:23.

the Father in respect to His divinity, becomes less than His Father in respect to His humanity.<sup>56</sup>

St. Grigor, reflecting on the birth of Christ, confesses His immaculate conception –that is to say, the conception was without semen. As mentioned earlier, St. Grigor’s focus on the immaculate conception of Christ makes a unique and distinctive characteristic to his Creed.

If Christ’s conception was without semen, it follows that His birth was untainted. The birth of the Son of God was through the power of the Holy Spirit. The third Person of the Holy Trinity first cleaned the womb of the Blessed Virgin and then prepared it as a temple for God’s dwelling. Thus, through the majesty of the Father and the power of the Holy Spirit, the Word of God restrained Himself for nine months in the womb of the Holy Virgin.

St. Grigor confesses his faith in the Incarnate Word of God, using language based upon the famous Cyrilian formula, “One is the nature of the Incarnate Word of God”. According to theology of the Armenian Church, the Incarnate Word of God has united, one nature. Those who view the Armenian Church as monophysite have misunderstood the dogmatic formula of “one nature”. As mentioned earlier, the Armenian Church officially has condemned the monophysitism of Eutyches, as well as the duophysitism of Nestorius.

The Armenian Church confesses Christ in one nature, united. That is to say the Armenian Church recognizes the absolute unity of divine and human natures in Christ. After the union of the two natures in Christ, the Armenian Church recognizes and understands one nature in the Incarnate Word of God. The Armenian Church does not claim a composition of a new nature in Christ. She does not proclaim that the human nature disappeared in the divine nature of Christ. Rather, by “united, one nature” the Armenian Church professes the unity of divine and human natures in the Incarnate Word of God, Jesus Christ. This “united, one nature” is without division, alteration, mixture, and confusion. This mysterious unity of two natures in Christ, thus, can be called “united, one nature”.

Since the divinity of Christ has neither beginning nor end, His humanity has a beginning but not an end, for “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever”.<sup>57</sup> The perfect humanity of Christ is composed of a rational soul, mind, and body from the Holy Virgin. This perfect humanity was without sin.

It was the same Son of God who was baptized in the River Jordan, was tempted by Satan and overcome him, preached salvation to people, labored, was fatigued, became hungry and thirsty in the flesh.

56 Cf. John 14:28.

57 Heb. 3:18.

Although Christ is God, He willingly accepted suffering and crucifixion for the salvation of humanity. This obedience to God culminated with Christ's death on the cross and resurrection from the dead. That is to say God in the flesh suffered, was crucified, and died for our salvation.

St. Grigor's Creed teaches that Christ died in the flesh, but He was alive in the divinity. Christ was crucified and died on the cross but remained alive in respect to His divinity, for the divinity is immortal and eternal. Christ was neither a mere human nor a divine human. Rather He is Incarnate God, immortal and eternal.

Christ's divinity never left His humanity. The body of Christ was united with His divinity in His death. The soul was inseparable from His divinity when He descended to hell. If the Father is God of the living and the dead, Christ is the Savior of both the living and the dead. Time and space could not limit the saving efficacy of His cross and resurrection. That is to say, St. Grigor confesses the undivided and inseparable unity of two natures in Christ, through which Christ redeemed the universe.

The foundation of the Christian faith is the resurrection of Jesus Christ: "If Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation has been in vain and your faith has been in vain".<sup>58</sup> After His resurrection Christ, with the same body, ascended to the heavens and was seated at the right hand of His Father. In the phrase "with the same body", St. Grigor asserts Christ's bodily ascension to His Father. Through his Creed, St. Grigor teaches the Armenian faithful not to believe those who reject the bodily ascension of Christ to the Father. The image of Christ sitting at the right hand of His Father is a symbol of honor, glory, and coequality, for the Son is co-eternal, co-worshiped, and co-glorified with the Father.

Furthermore, St. Grigor affirms the Second Coming of Christ in the same body and the glory of the Father. This glorious Coming of Christ to this world will mark the end of our present age and the beginning of eternal life. In St. Grigor's Creed, the second coming of Christ is described with the eschatological images of judgment of the living and the dead, universal resurrection, and reward of each person's deeds: "everlasting life for the righteous, and everlasting suffering for the sinful".

Curiously, St. Grigor does not explicitly talk about the kingdom of heaven in his Creed. Rather, he mentions that the righteous will inherit the life eternal, and the sinful will go away into eternal punishment.<sup>59</sup> Thus, talking about the reward of deeds, St. Grigor confesses his belief in the heavenly kingdom that God has reserved only for those who love God.<sup>60</sup>

58 1 Cor. 15:14.

59 Cf. Matt. 25:46.

60 Cf. John 14:2-3; 1 Cor. 2:9.

As a summary, St. Grigor, in his Creed, professes the orthodox faith and theology of the Armenian Church. The Incarnate Word of God, in the mysterious unity of His divine and human natures, redeemed the entire universe. Then He ascended to the Father with the same body. He shall come again in the same body and the glory of His Father to judge and establish His final justice on the new earth and in the new heaven. This is the ultimate goal of history, a vision revealed to certain apostles as a verification of God's words.<sup>61</sup>

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Summing up the paper on the theology and interpretation of the articles in St. Grigor's Creed, we can draw the following conclusions.

The Creed of St. Grigor expresses the necessity of that time to proclaim the orthodox faith of the Armenian Apostolic Holy Church against the teachings of the Unitors, who preached in Armenia in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries A.D.

St. Grigor's Creed has a great significance and exclusive role in the Armenian Church, for it has been used as a symbol of the faith of the Armenian Church. The Creed is still recited at the beginning of the Night Hour Prayer and during the Rite of Priestly Ordination.

The articles of St. Grigor's Creed are differentiated from the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds in their order, contents, and new language. Yet the new language is in keeping with the orthodox teachings and dogmatic formulas of the first three Ecumenical Councils.

This Creed very strictly emphasizes the mysterious and absolute unity of the divine and human natures in the Incarnate Word of God, Jesus Christ.

The Creed of St. Grigor is a brief statement of the theological and dogmatic teachings of the Armenian Church, which she believes, confesses, and teaches to her faithful.

The Creed of St. Grigor, as a confession of the orthodox faith, has become the foundation and cornerstone of theology in the Armenian Church. The faithful of the Armenian Church are born and nourished in the bosom of the Armenian Apostolic Church through the Creed of St. Grigor. Needless to say, this is how they have kept their faith in one God and one Lord, Jesus Christ.

Although St. Grigor mentions neither the sacraments of the Armenian Church nor the Divine Liturgy in his Creed, St. Grigor's Creed has a unique position and significant role in the life of the Armenian Church. This Creed always reminds the Armenian Church faithful of the most important articles and points of our Christian faith – points that might otherwise have been forgotten over the course of centuries. It

61 Cf. 2 Cor. 12:3-4; 2 Pet. 3:13; Rev. 21:1.

directs and leads the Armenian faithful to the one God and one Lord, Jesus the Christ, who is “the way and the truth and the life” (John 14:6).

Because of its significance in the faith-life of the Armenian Church, the Creed of St. Grigor of Tat’ev provides a fruitful starting point for those scholars who wish to research the theology of the Armenian Apostolic Holy Church.

## ***APPENDICIES***

### ***Translation of Other Nicene Creeds as Preserved in the Armenian Church***

We believe in one God, the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, of things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of God the Father, only-begotten, that is of the substance of the Father.

God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten and not made; of the same nature of the Father, by whom all things came into being in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible;

Who for us humans and for our salvation came down from heaven, took body, became human, was born perfectly of the holy Virgin Mary by the Holy Spirit.

By whom He took body, soul and mind and everything that is in human, truly and not in semblance.

He suffered and was crucified and was buried and rose again on the third day and ascended into heaven with the same body and sat at the right hand of the Father.

He is to come with the same body and with the glory of the Father to judge the living and the dead; of His kingdom there is no end.

We believe also in the Holy Spirit, the uncreated and the perfect; who spoke in the Law and in the Prophets and in the Gospels;

Who came down upon the Jordan, preached in the apostles and dwelled in the saints.

We believe also in only one universal and apostolic Holy Church;

In one baptism with repentance for the remission and forgiveness of sins;

In the resurrection of the dead, in the everlasting judgment of souls and bodies, in the kingdom of heaven and in the life eternal.

## ***Anathema***

As for those who say there was a time when the Son was not, or there was a time when the Holy Spirit was not or that they came into being out of nothing; or who say that the Son of God or the Holy Spirit are of a different substance and that they are changeable or alterable, such does the universal and apostolic Church anathematize.

## ***Doxology of St. Gregory the Illuminator***

As for us, we shall glorify Him who was before the ages, worshipping the Holy Trinity, and the one Godhead, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and always and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

Translation of the Creedal Statement Recited at the Rite of Baptism in the Armenian Church

We believe in the all-holy Trinity, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

We believe in the annunciation of Gabriel, the nativity of Christ, [His] baptism, [His] passion, [His] crucifixion, [His] three-day entombment, [His] resurrection, [His] divine ascension, [His] sitting at the right hand of the Father, [His] awe-filled and glorious second coming; [this] we confess and believe.

# THE CREED OF THE ARMENIAN APOSTOLIC HOLY CHURCH

ACCORDING TO ST. GRIGOR OF TAT'EV

## SUMMARY

“The Profession of the Orthodox Faith,” composed by St. Grigor of Tat’ev (†1409), an Armenian church father, is one of the most famous creedal statements in the Armenian Church. Through his confession of the faith, St. Grigor makes the official teaching of the Armenian Church more understandable and acceptable to the Armenian Christians. Faithful to the dogmatic formulas confirmed by the Armenian Church fathers, St. Grigor of Tat’ev’s profession of the Christian faith interprets the orthodox beliefs of the Armenian Church.

St. Grigor’s Creed has a great significance and exclusive role in the Armenian Church, for it has been used as a symbol of the faith of the Armenian Church. The Creed is still recited at the beginning of the Night Hour Prayer and during the Rite of Priestly Ordination.

St. Grigor’s Creed is different from those of the Apostles’ and Nicene Creeds in their order, contents, and new language. Yet the new language is in keeping with the orthodox teachings and dogmatic formulas of the first three Ecumenical Councils. St. Grigor’s Creed very strictly emphasizes the mysterious and absolute unity of the divine and human natures in the Incarnate Word of God, Jesus Christ.

The Creed of St. Grigor is a brief statement of the theological and dogmatic teachings of the Armenian Church, which she believes, confesses, and teaches to her faithful.

Thus, the Creed of St. Grigor has become the foundation and cornerstone of theology in the Armenian Church. Because of its significance in the faith-life of the Armenian Church, the Creed of St. Grigor of Tat’ev provides a fruitful starting point for those scholars who wish to research the theology of the Armenian Apostolic Holy Church.