

**"Hymn to the Creator
of Heaven and Earth"
and Other Prayers**

**From the "Major Works"
series**

CJS Hayward

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Preface

"A theologian is one who prays, and one who prays truly is a theologian."

Such is the saying that has rebounded from the ages, from an age when 'theology' first meant the direct experience of God and not an academic discipline. These works of theology are so many invitations to pray in wonder at the immeasurable glory of God. They tell of a saint who was known for being generous with his last ounce of wheat, a God who is greater than can be thought, a God whose glory is reflected in creation, a labyrinth we live in, openness to a God who is forever open to us, and the light yoke of serving the Lord. All of these offer beams of light shooting off a prism, or a gem, and you are invited to read them all.

Akathist to St. Philaret the Merciful

Kontakion 1

To thee, O camel who passed through the eye of the needle, we offer thanks and praise: for thou gavest of thy wealth to the poor, as an offering to Christ. Christ God received thy gift as a loan, repaying thee exorbitantly, in this transient life and in Heaven. Rejoice, O flowing fountain of Heaven's treasures! (*Repeated thrice.*)

Oikos 1

Thou hadst earthly wealth yet knewest true treasure: thou madest use of thy possessions but trustedst them never, for in thee was the Kingdom of God and thy treasurehouse was Heaven. Wherefore thou hearest these praises which we offer to thee:

Rejoice, illustrious and wealthy noble who knew true wealth!

Rejoice, O thou who were ever mindful of the poor!

Rejoice, who knew thy deeds to the poor are deeds done to

Christ!

Rejoice, O thou who knew true wealth from false!

Rejoice, O thou who knew that we can take nothing from the world!

Rejoice, O thou who knew that the righteous would never be forsaken!

Rejoice, O thou who gave ever more than was asked!

Rejoice, O thou who withheld not thy last ounce of wheat!

Rejoice, O thou who gave all six bushels to one who asked for a little!

Rejoice, O thou whose friend gave thee forty bushels thereafter!

Rejoice, O thou who trusted in the Lord with all his heart!

Rejoice, O flowing fountain of Heaven's treasures!

Kontakion 2

Thou knewest treasure enough to feed thy household for a hundred years without work: And thou wert true to thy name, Philaret or "Lover of Virtue", even when thine own wife saw not the horses on the mountain and chariots of fire which surround the true lover of virtue. But with eyes raised to fiery Heaven, we cry out with thee: Alleluia!

Oikos 2

Thou invitedst thine own to join thy love of virtue, and thine own received not thine invitation. But thine invitation remaineth open, and we who receive thine invitation and hearken to the open door cry out to thee in praise:

Rejoice, O diadem of married life in the world!

Rejoice, O thou who knewest virtue as treasure!

Rejoice, O thou who fed a household out of the treasurehouse of thy virtue!

Rejoice, O thou who knew not the greed of Midas's curse!

Rejoice, O thou whose gifts would yet multiply and enrich

the recipient!

Rejoice, O thou who was generous when he was rich!

Rejoice, O thou who was raided by marauders yet became no less generous!

Rejoice, O thou who trusted God when he had much and when he had little!

Rejoice, O thou who knewest that riches profit not in the day of wrath!

Rejoice, O thou whose virtue profited in easy times and hard times alike!

Rejoice, O flowing fountain of Heaven's treasures!

Kontakion 3

Many a generous beggar will give his last penny, whilst few a rich man will give to thee from his hedge of protection. Yet we behold a wonder in thee, who was rich, illustrious, and of noble lineage, and esteemed these not. Thy hedge of protection was the Lord God, and virtue and treasure in Heaven, and thou wert generous unto thine uttermost farthing. To thee, a rich man more generous than a beggar, we cry: Alleluia!

Oikos 3

Thou transcendedst the virtues of pagan philosophy: fortitude, justice, prudence, and temperance, the virtues of a well lived earthly life. But thou knewest the Christian, deiform virtues: faith, hope, and love, the virtues of a Heavenly life already present in an egg in life on earth. Wherefore we cry out to thee:

Rejoice, O thou whose fortitude sought no protection from earthly treasures!

Rejoice, O thou whose justice transcended human reckoning!

Rejoice, O thou whose prudence was the Wisdom who is Christ!

Rejoice, O thou whose temperance sought from earthly things nothing in excess of what they could give!

Rejoice, O thou whose faith trusted that Christ would faithfully provide!

Rejoice, O thou whose hope in God was never disappointed!

Rejoice, O thou whose love refrained from sharing neither virtue nor earthly possessions!

Rejoice, O thou whose joy flowed in easy times and hard!

Rejoice, O thou whose peace flowed from the silence of Heaven!

Rejoice, O thou whose generosity was perfect!

Rejoice, O flowing fountain of Heaven's treasures!

Kontakion 4

We will forever underestimate thy generosity if we merely count what thou gavest against what much or little property thou possessesdt, for thine open hand was a shadow and an icon of the vast wealth thou heldest in the generous treasure in Heaven, and this vast treasure thou laid hold to as Philaret, lover of virtue, which is to say lover of treasures in Heaven, eclipseth thy generosity with mere earthly property as the sun eclipseth the moon—nay, as the sun eclipseth a candle! Wherefore, with thee who hoarded true treasure, we cry: Alleluia!

Oikos 4

Beseech the Lord God that we also might seek true treasure in Heaven, where neither moth nor rust corrodes and thieves do not break in and steal. Wherefore we cry out in wonder to thee:

Rejoice, O thou who drunk from the wellspring of Truth!

Rejoice, O thou who were fed by the Tree of Life!

Rejoice, O thou who knew silver from dross!
Rejoice, O thou who never grasped at dross because thou
clungst to the Treasure for whom every treasure is named!
Rejoice, O thou who esteemed men of humble birth because
thou questedst after the royal priesthood!
Rejoice, O thou who grasped treasure next to which every
earthly endowment is but dust and ashes!
Rejoice, O thou who counted the poor and needy as more
precious than gold!
Rejoice, O thou who cast away shadows to behold the Sun of
Righteousness!
Rejoice, O thou who never forsook the Lord!
Rejoice, O thou whom the Lord never abandoned!
Rejoice, O thou who found that not one of His good
promises has failed!
Rejoice, O flowing fountain of Heaven's treasures!

Kontakion 5

Ever seeking Christ, thou becamest thyself like Christ,
the source and the summit of all virtue. Wishing to imitate
thee as thou imitatedst Christ, we cry unto thee: Alleluia!

Oikos 5

Every virtue is an icon of Christ, an icon not before us,
but in us. Seeking after the virtues as we seek Christ, we cry
out to thee:

Rejoice, O thou divine lover of virtue!
Rejoice, O thou who knew the Source of virtue!
Rejoice, O thou whose virtue was an imprint of Christ!
Rejoice, O thou who perfected the divine image with
voluntary likeness!
Rejoice, O thou who teaches us virtue in the Christian walk!
Rejoice, O thou ever willing to share not only possessions
but virtue!

Rejoice, O thou in whom Christ sat enthroned on virtue!
 Rejoice, O thou who in virtue loved and served God!
 Rejoice, O volume wherein the Word was inscribed in the
 ink of the virtues!
 Rejoice, O thou who ever banishest passions!
 Rejoice, O polished mirror refulgent with the uncreated
 Light!
 Rejoice, O flowing fountain of Heaven's treasures!

Kontakion 6

Eating from the Tree of Life, thou becamest thyself a
 tree of life, to the nourishment of many. Hungering for
 lifegiving food, we cry with thee: Alleluia!

Oikos 6

Sown in good soil, thou baredst fruit thirty, sixty, a
 hundredfold. Wherefore we cry unto thee:

Rejoice, O thou who were food to the hungry!
 Rejoice, O thou who were wealth to the destitute!
 Rejoice, O thou who were a robe of boldness to the naked!
 Rejoice, O thou who gave abundantly out of thine
 abundance!
 Rejoice, O thou who gave abundantly out of lack and want!
 Rejoice, O thou who were God's abundance to thy
 neighbour!
 Rejoice, O thou who never merely gave money or property!
 Rejoice, O thou who always gave with a blessing!
 Rejoice, O thou who loved Christ in thy neighbour!
 Rejoice, O thou tree whose shade sheltered many!
 Rejoice, O thou river who irrigated vast lands!
 Rejoice, O flowing fountain of Heaven's treasures!

Kontakion 7

Blessed art thou, O holy Father Philaret the Merciful!
Merciful wert thou, and thou receivedst mercy, wherefore
we cry with thee: Alleluia!

Oikos 7

Feeding the hungry is greater work than raising the
dead! Wherefore we ask of thee no miracle, O merciful
Father Philaret, for thou shewedst the continual miracle of
mercy, and we cry unto thee:

Rejoice, O thou who gave the very last thou hadst!
Rejoice, O thou who received recompense from Christ
thereafter!
Rejoice, O thou who withheld nothing from him who asked
of thee!
Rejoice, O thou who wherewith withheld nothing from
Christ!
Rejoice, O thou who clung not to gold!
Rejoice, O thou who clung to the Light next to which gold is
as dust!
Rejoice, O wise one who made blessings as abundant as
dust!
Rejoice, O thou who were ever full of mercy!
Rejoice, O thou whose mercy was as a lamp!
Rejoice, O thou who firmly beheld the invisible!
Rejoice, O thou whose faith worked mercy through love!
Rejoice, O flowing fountain of Heaven's treasures!

Kontakion 8

Rejoice, thou who wilt stand before Christ's dread
judgment throne numbered among those who hear: Come,
ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for
you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungred,

and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came to me. And thou wilt cry with the blessed saints: Alleluia!

Oikos 8

Knowing that no man can love God whom he cannot see except that he love his neighbor whom he has seen, thou wert ever merciful, wherefore we cry unto thee:

Rejoice, O thou who fed Christ when He was an hungred!
Rejoice, O thou who gave Christ to drink when He was athirst!

Rejoice, O thou who showed Christ hospitality when He came a stranger!

Rejoice, O thou who clothed Christ when He was naked!

Rejoice, O thou who visited Christ when He was sick!

Rejoice, O thou who came to Christ when He was in prison!

Rejoice, O thou who met the least of these and saw Christ!

Rejoice, O thou who called every man thy brother!

Rejoice, O thou who saw no man as outside of God's love!

Rejoice, O thou perfect in mercy as thy Heavenly Father is perfect in mercy!

Rejoice, O lamp ever scintillating with the Light of Heaven!

Rejoice, O flowing fountain of Heaven's treasures!

Kontakion 9

All the angels were amazed at the excellence of thy virtue, for thy name "Philaret" is not only "Lover of Virtue" but "Lover of Excellence", for in thee excellence, virtue, and power are one and the same. Wherefore thou joinest the angels in crying: Alleluia!

Oikos 9

Even the most eloquent of orators cannot explain how thy virtue excelleth, for they cannot explain how in every circumstance thou soughtest out and lovedst virtue. But we marvel and cry out faithfully:

Rejoice, O rich man who cared for the poor!
Rejoice, O illustrious man who cared for men of no account!
Rejoice, O excellent in virtue in times of advantage!
Rejoice, O excellent in virtue in times of suffering as well!
Rejoice, O man who held great treasure and yet ever fixed his eyes upon true Treasure!
Rejoice, O thou who in every circumstance found an arena for excellent virtue!
Rejoice, O thou who were ever an excellent worshipper of God!
Rejoice, O thou who in the world escaped the Devil's snares!
Rejoice, O thou who unmasked hollow Mammon!
Rejoice, O thou who found harbor on the sea of life!
Rejoice, O thou who by loving virtue loved Christ!
Rejoice, O flowing fountain of Heaven's treasures!

Kontakion 10

Thy life wast a living manuscript of the Sermon on the Mount, for even Solomon in his splendor had not raiment like unto thy faith. Beholding thy splendor we cry with thee: Alleluia!

Oikos 10

Thou storedst up possessions wherewith not to worry: not fickle and corruptible treasure on earth, but constant and incorruptible treasure in Heaven. Wherefore we cry unto thee:

Rejoice, O thou who however rich wert poor in spirit!
 Rejoice, O thou who mourned thy neighbor's unhappiness!
 Rejoice, O thou meek before thy neighbor's suffering!
 Rejoice, O thou who hungered and thirsted for justice and
 all virtue!
 Rejoice, O thou mirror of mercy!
 Rejoice, O thou who remained pure in heart!
 Rejoice, O thou who made deepest peace!
 Rejoice, O living mirror of the Beatitudes!
 Rejoice, O thou soaring as the birds of the air!
 Rejoice, O thou who wert devoted to one Master, and
 despised all others!
 Rejoice, O living exposition of the Sermon on the Mount!
 Rejoice, O flowing fountain of Heaven's treasures!

Kontakion 11

Thou wert as the widow who bereaved herself even of
 her last two farthings: not only gave she more than all the
 others, but she who gave up her creaturely life received the
 uncreated, immortal, and eternal life. Like her, thou wert a
 vessel empty enough to fill, wherefore we cry with thee:
 Alleluia!

Oikos 11

Thou wert a second Job, steadfast whilst Satan tore off
 layer after layer of thy belongings to show that there was
 nothing inside. Wherefore, we cry to thee who ever
 persevered:

Rejoice, O thou worshiper of God in plenty and in need!
 Rejoice, O thou icon of perseverance and faith!
 Rejoice, O thou generous with thy coin and generous with
 thy virtue!
 Rejoice, O thou phoenix ever arisen from thy very ashes!
 Rejoice, O thou saint immobile in thy dispassion!

Rejoice, O thou who in want showed the truth of thy generosity in easy times!

Rejoice, O thou who ever blessed the name of the Lord!

Rejoice, O thou who with many possessions loved them not!

Rejoice, O thou who with few possessions loved them no more!

Rejoice, O thou who remained stalwart whilst Satan tore away what was thine, to show there was nothing inside!

Rejoice, O thou who were vindicated when God peeled off the nothing and showed there was everything inside!

Rejoice, O thou who vindicated God as did Job!

Rejoice, O flowing fountain of Heaven's treasures!

Kontakion 12

Thou hadst no food in the house, when imperial emissaries came looking for a bride for the Emperor: thou rich in Heaven, in trust thou beganst preparations to honourably meet the imperial emissaries. And thy neighbours came and brought food, a fitting feast, and the imperial emissaries found thy granddaughter finest in virtue and modesty, choosing her for her excellence to become Empress. Wherefore we cry with thee: Alleluia!

Oikos 12

When all this had come to pass, in thy virtue, in thine excellence, thou knewest what is real treasure. In thy virtue and humility, thou refusedst all imperial rank and office, saying that it sufficed thee to be known as grandfather to the Empress. Wherefore, amazed, we cry to thee:

Rejoice, O thou who knew true Treasure!

Rejoice, O thou who were lover of virtue and excellence!

Rejoice, O thou who were rich and cared for the poor!

Rejoice, O thou who lost almost all and still opened thy hand!

Rejoice, O thou who became grandfather to the Empress
whilst remaining ever humble!

Rejoice, O thou who were illustrious and noble yet
cherished those of low estate!

Rejoice, O thou who were razed nigh unto the earth, and
ever remained excellent as a lover of virtue!

Rejoice, O thou who were raised nigh unto Heaven, and
ever remained humble as a lover of virtue!

Rejoice, O thou who sought first the Kingdom of Heaven!

Rejoice, O thou who were given all other things as well!

Rejoice, O thou who even then fixed his virtuous gaze on
Christ!

Rejoice, O flowing fountain of Heaven's treasures!

Kontakion 13

O holy Father Philaret whose excellence was virtue and
whose virtue was excellence, whose power was virtue and
whose virtue was power, who was ever merciful and
generous out of thine overflowing virtue, ever protected by
the Kingdom of God, pray for us as we cry unto thee:
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! (*Repeated thrice.*)

Oikos 1

Thou hadst earthly wealth yet knewest true treasure:
thou madest use of thy possessions but trustedst them
never, for in thee was the Kingdom of God and thy
treasurehouse was Heaven. Wherefore thou hearest these
praises which we offer to thee:

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wealth!

Rejoice, O thou who were ever mindful of the poor!

Rejoice, who knew thy deeds to the poor are deeds done to
Christ!

Rejoice, O thou who knew true wealth from false!

Rejoice, O thou who knew that we can take nothing from the world!

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Kontakion 1

To thee, O camel who passed through the eye of the needle, we offer thanks and praise: for thou gavest of thy wealth to the poor, as an offering to Christ. Christ God received thy gift as a loan, repaying thee exorbitantly, in this transient life and in Heaven. Rejoice, O flowing fountain of Heaven's treasures!

Doxology

How shall I praise thee, O Lord?
For naught that I might say,
Nor aught that I may do,
Compareth to thy worth.
Thou art the Father for whom every fatherhood in Heaven
and on earth is named,
The Glory for whom all glory is named,
The Treasure for whom treasures are named,
The Light for whom all light is named,
The Love for whom all love is named,
The Eternal by whom all may glimpse eternity,
The Being by whom all beings exist,
יהוה
O ΩN.
The King of Kings and Lord of Lords,
Who art eternally praised,
Who art all that thou canst be,
Greater than aught else that may be thought,
Greater than can be thought.
In thee is light,
In thee is honour,
In thee is mercy,
In thee is wisdom, and praise, and every good thing.
For good itself is named after thee,

God immeasurable, immortal, eternal, ever glorious, and humble.

What mighteth compare to thee?
What praise equalleth thee?
If I be fearfully and wonderfully made,
Only can it be,
Wherewith thou art fearful and wonderful,
And ten thousand things besides,
Thou who art One,
Eternally beyond time,
So wholly One,
That thou mayest be called infinite,
Timeless beyond time thou art,
The One who is greater than infinity art thou.
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
The Three who are One,
No more bound by numbers than by word,
And yet the Son is called Ο ΛΟΓΟΣ,
The Word,
Divine ordering Reason,
Eternal Light and Cosmic Word,
Way pre-eminent of all things,
Beyond all, and infinitesimally close,
Thou transcendest transcendence itself,
The Creator entered into his Creation,
Sharing with us humble glory,
Lowered by love,
Raised to the highest,
The Suffering Servant known,
The King of Glory,
Ο ΩΝ.

What tongue mighteth sing of thee?
What noetic heart mighteth know thee,
With the knowledge that drinketh,
The drinking that knoweth,
Of the vous,

The loving, enlightened spiritual eye,
By which we may share the knowing,
Of divinised men joining rank on rank of angels.

Thou art,
The Hidden Transcendent God who transcendest
transcendence itself,
The One God who transfigurest Creation,
The Son of God became a Man that men might become the
sons of God,
The divine became man that man mighteth become divine.

Beyond measure is thy glory,
The weight of thy power transcendeth,
Thy power of thine all-surpassing authority bespeaketh,
And yet art thou,
Not in fire, not earthquake,
Not wind great as maelstrom,
But in soft gentle whisper,
Thy prophets wait upon thee,
For thy silence is more deafening than thunder,
Thine weakness stronger than the strength of men,
Thy humility surpassingly far exceedeth men's covetous
thirst for glory,
Thou who hidst in a manger,
Treasure vaster than the Heavens,
And who offerest us glory,
In those things of our lives,
That seem humble to us,
As a manger rude in a cavern stable.

Thou Christ God, manifest among Creation,
Vine, lamb, and our daily bread,
Tabernacled among us who may taste thy glory,
Art come the priest on high to offer thy Creation up into
Heaven,

Sanctified,
Transfigured,
Deified.

Wert thou a lesser god,
Numerically one as a creature is one,
Only one by an accident,
Naught more,
Then thou couldst not deify thine own creation,
Whilst remaining the only one god.

But thou art beyond all thought,
All word, all being,
We may say that thou existest,
But then we must say,
Thou art, I am not.
And if we say that we exist,
It is inadequate to say that thou existest,
For thou art the source of all being,
And beyond our being;
Thou art the source of all mind, wisdom, and reason,
Yet it is a fundamental error to imagine thee,
To think and reason in the mode of mankind.
Thou art not one god because there happeneth not more,
Thou art The One God because there mighteth not be
another beside thee.
Thus thou spakest to Moses,
Thou shalt have no other gods before me.
Which is to say,
Thou shalt admit no other gods to my presence.

And there *can* be no other god beside thee,
So deep and full is this truth,
That thy Trinity mighteth take naught from thine Oneness,
Nor could it be another alongside thy divine Oneness,
If this God became man,

That man become god.

Great art thou,
Greater than aught that can be thought,
And thus dealest thou,
With thy Creation.

For thou camest into the world,
O Christ,
Thy glory veiled,
But a few could see thy glory,
In a seed.

But thou returnest soon,
In years, or centuries, or ages untold,
A day or a thousand years, soon,
Then a seed no more.
None shall escape seeing you,
Not an angel choir to shepherds alone,
But rank on rank of angel host.
Every eye shall see thee,
And they also which pierced thee,
Thou camest and a few knees bowed,
Thou wilt return,
And every knee shall bow,
And every tongue shall confess,
Jesus Christ is Lord,
To the glory of God the Father,
As the Father triumphs in the Son.

Who mighteth tell of thy glory, thy might?
We hope for Heaven yet,
Yet the Heavens cannot contain thee.
Great art O ΩN,
And greatly to be praised.
Thou art awesome beyond all gods,

Who sayest,
Wound not my christs.
For the Son of God became the Son of Man,
That the sons of man might become the sons of God,
And the divine image,
The ancient and glorious foundation,
And radix of mankind,
Be transfigured,
Into the likeness of Christ,
And shine with uncreated Light,
The glory of God shining through his sons.

Let our spiritual eye be ever transfixed upon thine eternal
radiant glory,
Our hearts ever seeking thy luminous splendour,
Ever questing,
Ever sated,
Slaked by the greatest of draughts,
Which inflameth thirst.

Glorified art thou,
In all ages,
In every age,
Thy soft, gentle whisper,
Speaking life,
In every here and now,
And today.

Let us give our lives,
To thine all-surpassing greatness,
From this day,
From this hour,
Henceforth and forevermore.

Αμην,
So be it. Amen.

Glory

Glory,
Wonder,
World without end.

World without end:
Have I sought Thee,
When I fled afar off from Thee,
Thou alone whose Glory slaketh thirst,
World without end?

To Thee belongeth worship,
To Thee belongeth praise,
To Thee belongeth glory,
To the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
Both now and ever, and unto ages of ages.
Amen.

Why am I athirst,
I who seek water any place,
But from Thine own hand?

Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again:
But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him,
Shall never thirst;

But the water that I shall give him,
Shall be in him a well of water,
Springing up into everlasting life.

I seek my glory,
In thinly gilt traps,
And turn my back,
On the unadorned portals,
Through which Thou hast glorified me,
Ever seeking my glory,
While forbidding me to quest,
For my glory along accursed routes.

For we have committed two evils:
We have forsaken Thee,
The fountain of living waters,
And hewed ourselves out cisterns,
Broken cisterns that can hold no water.

We have committed this evil;
I must repent of it.

Glory and wonder, majesty and power,
Thou forbiddest us to seek our own glory,
That Thou mightest rightly glorify us,
With the maximum glory that could ever be ours.

Glory, glory, glory:
Glory surroundeth thee—
And drencheth those who humbly seek,
Thine own glory to magnify.
No man who seeketh,
Thine own glory to magnify,
Can far pursue his quest,
Before an invisible trickle comes before thy Throne,
And drencheth him,

In the glory he seeketh not,
Not for himself.

After this I looked, and,
Behold, a door was opened in heaven:
And the first voice which I heard was as it were of a
trumpet,
Talking with me;
Which said,
Come up hither,
And I will shew thee things which must be hereafter.
And immediately I was in the spirit:
And, behold, a throne was set in heaven,
And one sat on the throne.
And he that sat was to look upon,
Like a jasper and a sardine stone:
And there was a rainbow round about the throne,
In sight like unto an emerald.
And round about the throne were four and twenty seats:
And upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting,
Clothed in white raiment;
And they had on their heads crowns of gold.
And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings
and voices:
And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the
throne,
Which are the seven Spirits of God.
And before the throne,
There was a sea of glass like unto crystal:
And in the midst of the throne,
And round about the throne,
Were four beasts full of eyes before and behind.
And the first beast was like a lion,
And the second beast like a calf,
And the third beast had a face as a man,
And the fourth beast was like a flying eagle.
And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him;

And they were full of eyes within:
And they rest not day and night, saying,
"Holy, holy, holy,
LORD God Almighty,
Which was, and is, and is to come."
And when those beasts give glory and honour and thanks
To him that sat on the throne,
Who liveth for ever and ever,
The four and twenty elders,
Fall down before him that sat on the throne,
And worship him that liveth for ever and ever,
And cast their crowns before the throne, saying,
"Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and
power:
for thou hast created all things,
and for thy pleasure they are and were created."

There is more glory in Heaven and earth,
Than I ever dream of in my grasping:
Honor,
Majesty,
Glory,
Praise.
Let me seek this Thy glory,
And leave to Thee the seeking of mine own glory.
Thou hast said,
The greater thou art,
The more humble thyself,
And thou shalt find favour before the Lord.

Wonder.
Glory.
Help me forsake the quest,
To slake my thirst for mine own glory,
That thou mightest slake my thirst,
With a draught that infinitely eclipseth,
Such things as I have grasped.

Eye hath not seen,
Nor ear heard,
Neither have entered into the heart of man,
The things which God hath prepared for them that love
Him,
Things that begin in this here and now,
In ways beyond human reckoning.

Eye hath not seen,
Nor ear heard,
Neither have entered into the heart of man,
The things which God hath prepared for them that love
Him,
The eternity that is here now,
That which was from the beginning,
Which we have heard and still rings in our ears,
Which we have seen with our eyes and can still see how it
looks,
Which we have looked upon,
Which we have touched with our very own hands,
Of the Word of God:

The Lord is King!
He hath clothed Himself in glory!

The Labyrinth

What labyrinth is this,
Around and within me?
My God, my God, why have I forsaken Thee?

My God, my God, why have I forsaken Thee?
Why have I fled from Thy help,
And the Word whom Thou hast shouted?
My God, Thou criest out in the fullness of day,
And in season of night, yet there is no silence in me.
But Thou dwellest in a sanctuary:
Even the praises of Israel.
In Thee our fathers hoped,
They hoped, and Thou deliveredst them.
They cried to Thee, and were saved;
They hoped in Thee, and were delivered.
But I am a worm, no more a man,
A reproach to mankind, and of a people despised.
All who see laugh me to scorn,
They speak with their lips,
They shake their heads, saying,
He once trusted in the Lord,
Let Him deliver him,
Let Him save him,
If He still takes pleasure in him.

But Thou art He that drew me from the womb:
 My hope from my mother's breasts.
 I was cast on Thee from the womb;
 Thou wert my God even in my mother's belly.
 I stand afar off from Thee;
 For I have drawn nigh unto affliction,
 Where there are none who shall help.
 For bears have encompassed me;
 Ravening bears have circled round about me.
 They have opened their mouths against me,
 As a devouring and roaring dragon,
 As a dragon spewing fire and brimstone.
 I am poured out like water,
 Yea, my very bones are pulled out of place,
 My heart is like wax,
 Melting away in my bowels.
 My strong wealth is dried up like a potsherd,
 My tongue never sated in my throat,
 I have brought myself down,
 To the very dust of death.
 For many dogs have compassed me,
 The assembly of wicked doers hath beset me round,
 They ensnared my deeds and my movement.
 They have a count on all my bones,
 They observe and look on all I do and say.
 They have split among themselves what covered me,
 And my raiment perdureth but as perchance.

What is this labyrinth?
 What is this I have enmeshed myself in?
 For in the Sermon on the Mount,
 Hear the Lord the word spake:
 No man can serve two masters:
 Thou canst not serve God and Mammon.
 What reached Mammon in the days of yore?
 Ox and ass, a field, a vine,
 A house of single room, by single lamp enlightened:

What reaches Mammon in our tangled web?
Lexus and iPhone, or Nokia and Government Motors,
Alike impossible to medieval lord,
And not so different in reality:
Oh what a tangled web we weave,
When we allow branding us to deceive!
Space-conquering tools of train and car,
Dwarfed not by supersonic airplane nor spacecraft,
But by internet communication, and mobile,
Stripped communication bearing not communion,
In the panopticon of NSA forever recorded:
For in the Sermon on the Mount,
Hear the Lord the word spake:
No man can serve two masters:
Thou canst not serve God and Mammon:
When the apex of technology remained,
But the humble workshop of humble artisan,
Mammon's nature was spoken: not servant, but master,
A cruel yoke to shoulder, bear, and live.

But of our labyrinth,
Technology is neither beginning nor end,
Nor properly the center, for it sufficeth not,
To say as of computer games already obsolete,
You are in a maze of twisted Infocom parodies, all alike:
Do not confuse the skin with the heart.

Nor think only of the ancient attack on manhood,
Named porn, for it is not new:
Not new in sepia etching, nor old crumbling book;
Archaeologists dig it up in ancient ruins.
But in decades of yore, yt poison,
Called for a man to sneak into a store,
Hoping no one would see his parked car,
Beside a store of windows all papered;
Behold a new thing:
For now thou needest do no such thing,

It is included in a utility well nigh indispensable,
 And thou needest not even seek temptation:
 With a good filter, thou wilt receive less,
 Of offers that make Hugh Hefner look like Botticelli,
 And shouldst thy natural lust not suffice thee,
 Thou wilt be told thou needest Viagra.

But call this not the sum of it either:
 For SecondLife is called SecondWife,
 Not only because thou needest not hear the moralist's
 protest,
 Fornicate using your OWN genitals!
 Push this temptation aside, which is not the sole *raison
 d'être*:
 The true *raison d'être* be never new:
 The true *raison d'être* was known to desert monks,
 Ancient and today,
 And by these fathers is called,
 Temptation, passion, demon,
 Of escaping the world.

SecondLife is the apotheosis,
 Nay, the next installment,
 Of what came in an earlier installment,
 In cinematic movie theatres,
 Such as rural American volunteers preserve,
 As a piece of history to keep alive for the young,
 And moralists said more than that movies can be made
 lewd,
 For they spake of an escape into fantasy,
 Whether literal or metaphorical is a smaller question than it
 might seem:
 For fantasy is fiction squared, and in Western history,
 Fiction emerged, with abstraction:
Abs-trahere, from Latin,
 Meaning pulled back from real things,
 And fantasy and science fiction provide a next installment:

If the characters and story be created whole cloth,
Why not unfold a bit further:
Why not the story's world itself?
And this ancient passion of escaping the world,
Of which monks were ever presently warned,
We devise more potent ways to escape,
Where God has placed us,
Whence thou wouldst do well to hear exhortation,
Of disenchanting exiles of SecondLife:
Get a first life!

We have many ways to create our own private world:
With technology or with ancient imagination,
Modern or postmodern in our bent,
Our own private escape from what is around us,
Our own private Hell,
But this need not rule us!

Tis a tangled labyrinth before us,
And whilst we gain,
In learning to use technology,
Not to further our journeys of passion,
But as tools in living life rightly,
The door to life rightly lived,
Is not closed to those who are neither ancient nor rural:
There is a little gain in learning to bear with silence,
Endure hunger, live on less,
As a remedy to covetousness count thy blessings,
Pray through boredom,
Yet here also,
Do not mistake the skin for the heart.

In the labyrinth, there is no hope:
Only infinite possibilities to lose thy way.

But above the labyrinth there is hope.

And Christ is the Door,
 Now as much as ever;
 Asceticism in the Church is life-giving,
 Now as much as ever,
 Unseen warfare can lead us to serene contemplation,
 Now as much as ever,
 And God is here.

Paradise is wherever the saints are,
 And we can find Paradise even with a labyrinth,
 That surrounds us,
 With no room to escape:
 We do not need to escape.

But Thou, O Lord, be not far from me,
 O mine every strength, hasten to help me.
 Save my soul from the glaive:
 My very nature from the power of the dog.
 Save me from the dragon's mouth:
 For let me learn humility as a unicorn's horn.
 I will declare Thy praise to my brethren:
 In the midst of the Church I will praise Thee.
 You who fear the Lord, praise Him;
 All ye seed of Jacob, glorify him;
 For He hath not despised nor abhorred,
 The affliction of the afflicted:
 Neither hath He hidden his face from him,
 But when he cried to Him for help, He heard him.
 My praise is before thee in the great congregation;
 I will pay my vows before them that hold him in holy fear.
 The poor shall eat and be satisfied;
 And they that seek the Lord shall praise him;
 Let their hearts live forever!
 All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the
 Lord:
 And all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before
 him.

For the Kingdom is the Lord's,
And he is the Ruler of the nations.
All the prosperous upon the earth shall eat and worship;
All those that go down to the dust shall bow before him:
And my soul eternally lives through him,
My posterity shall serve him;
The Lord will be declared to a generation yet to be born.
They shall declare to a people yet to be formed,
That by the Lord:
It is finished.

Open

How shall I be open to thee,
O Lord who is forever open to me?
Incessantly I seek to clench with tight fist,
Such joy as thou gavest mine open hand.
Why do I consider thy providence,
A light thing, and of light repute,
Next to the grandeur I imagine?
Why spurn I such grandeur as prayed,
Not my will but thine be done,
Such as taught us to pray,
Hallowed be thy name,
Thy kingdom come:
Thy will be done?
Why be I so tight and constricted,
Why must clay shy back,
From the potter's hand,
Who glorifieth clay better,
Than clay knoweth glory to seek?
Why am I such a small man?
Why do I refuse the joy you give?
Or, indeed, must I?

And yet I know,
Thou, the Theotokos, the saints,

Forever welcome me with open hearts,
And the oil of their gladness,
Loosens my fist,
Little by little.

God, why is my fist tightened on openness,
When thou openest in me?

A Yoke that is Easy and a Burden that is Light

O Lord, who hast said with thine own most pure lips, Without me you can do nothing, and My yoke is easy, and my burden is light, grant to me fortitude to cast down the iron yoke of passions which thou wilt to work in me to destroy. Grant me courage and trust to accept the yoke that is easy and the burden that is light, like the birds of the air, like unto the lilies of the field, where even Solomon in all his glory mighteth not make a yoke strong enough to, overpowering, subdue.

Grant unto me a calm no storm hath shaken: or rather, grant me that peace wherein thou calledst forth, Peace! Be still! And if I be in fear after thou hast commanded so, let it be no more fear of wind and wave, but a terror of wonder at thou thyself, to whom all things in life must needs answer.

Free me from making iron yokes in my lack of trust, in my laziness. Free me to take on thy yoke thou it beseemeth madness and do thou break into pieces the idolatrous iron yoke I have tied to my back and not lifted a finger to release. Forgive my doubts, my lack of faith, my seeking sovereign lordship and control over the circumstances of my life. Give me easy circumstances, if thou wilt, or hard, and in either let me find a yoke that is easy and a burden that is light.

Save me from trying to make a light yoke out of iron; do thou Carpenter, who hath never created an iron yoke, free me from my flight to escape the easy yoke and light burden which thou preparedst for me before the world was created, and ever summonest me to, whatever my fugue by which I flee from thy weal.

Do thou grant me this, together with thy Father of all Providence, and thine all-holy, ever-present, and life-bestowing Spirit. Amen.

Hymn to the Creator of Heaven and Earth

With what words
shall I hymn the Lord of Heaven and Earth,
the Creator of all things visible and invisible?
Shall I indeed meditate
on the beauty of his Creation?

As I pray to Thee, Lord,
what words shall I use,
and how shall I render Thee praise?

Shall I thank thee for the living tapestry,
oak and maple and ivy and grass,
that I see before me
as I go to return to Thee at Church?

Shall I thank Thee for Zappy,
and for her long life—
eighteen years old and still catching mice?
Shall I thank thee for her tiger stripes,
the color of pepper?
Shall I thank thee for her kindness,
and the warmth of her purr?

Shall I thank Thee for a starry sapphire orb
hung with a million million diamonds, where
"The heavens declare the glory of God;
and the firmament proclaims the work of his hands.
Day to day utters speech,
and night to night proclaims knowledge.
There are no speeches or words,
in which their voices are not heard.
Their voice is gone out into all the earth,
and their words to the end of the earth.
In the sun he has set his tabernacle;
and he comes forth as a bridegroom out of his chamber:
he will exult as a giant to run his course."?

Shall I thank Thee for the river of time,
now flowing quickly,
now flowing slowly,
now narrow,
now deep,
now flowing straight and clear,
now swirling in eddies that dance?

Shall I thank Thee for the hymns and songs,
the chant at Church, when we praise Thee in the head of
Creation, the vanguard of Creation that has come from Thee
in Thy splendor and to Thee returns in reverence?

Shall I thank thee for the Chalice:
an image,
an icon,
a shadow of,
a participation in,
a re-embodiment of,
the Holy Grail?

Shall I forget how the Holy Grail itself

is but the shadow,
the impact,
the golden surface reflecting the light,
secondary reflection to the primeval Light,
the wrapping paper that disintegrates next to the Gift it
holds:
that which is
mystically and really
the body and the blood of Christ:
the family of saints
for me to be united to,
and the divine Life?

Shall I meditate
on how I am fed
by the divine generosity
and the divine gift
of the divine energies?

Shall I thank Thee for a stew I am making,
or for a body nourished by food?

Shall I indeed muse that there is
nothing else I could be nourished by,
for spaghetti and bread and beer
are from a whole cosmos
illuminated by the divine Light,
a candle next to the sun,
a beeswax candle,
where the sun's energy filters through plants
and the work of bees
and the work of men
to deliver light and energy from the sun,
and as candle to sun,
so too is the bread of earth
to the Bread that came from Heaven,

the work of plants and men,
the firstfruits of Earth
returned to Heaven,
that they may become
the firstfruits of Heaven
returned to earth?

Shall I muse on the royal "we,"
where the kings and queens
said not of themselves "I", but "we"
while Christians are called to say "we"
and learn that the "I" is to be transformed,
made luminous,
scintillating,
when we move beyond "Me, me, me,"
to learn to say, "we"?

And the royal priesthood is one in which we are called to be
a royal priesthood,
a chosen people,
more than conquerors,
a Church of God's eclecticism,
made divine,
a family of little Christs,
sons to God and brothers to Christ,
the ornament of the visible Creation,
of rocks and trees and stars and seas,
and the spiritual Creation as well:
seraphim, cherubim, thrones
dominions, principalities, authorities,
powers, archangels, angels,
rank on rank of angels,
singing before the presence of God,
and without whom no one can plumb the depths
of the world that can be seen and touched.

For to which of the angels did God say,
"You make my Creation complete," or
"My whole Creation, visible and invisible,
is encapsulated in you,
summed up in your human race?"

To which of the angels
did the divine Word say,
"I am become what you are
that you may become what I am?"

To which of the angels did the Light say,
"Thou art my Son; today I have adopted Thee,"
and then turn to say,
"You are my sons; today I have adopted you;
because I AM WHO I AM,
you are who you are."?

So I am called to learn to say, "we",
and when we learn to say we,
that "we" means,
a royal priesthood,
a chosen people,
more than conquerors,
a Church of God's eclecticism,
a family of little Christs,
made divine,
the ornament of Creation, visible and invisible,
called to lead the whole Creation
loved into being by God,
to be in love
that to God they may return.

And when we worship thus,
it cannot be only us, for
apples and alligators,

boulders and bears,
creeks and crystals,
dolphins and dragonflies,
eggplants and emeralds,
fog and furballs,
galaxies and grapes,
horses and habaneros,
ice and icicles,
jacinth and jade,
kangaroos and knots,
lightning and light,
meadows and mist,
nebulas and neutrons,
oaks and octupi,
porcupines and petunias,
quails and quarks,
rocks and rivers,
skies and seas,
toads and trees,
ukeleles and umber umbrellas,
wine and weirs,
xylophones and X-rays,
yuccas and yaks,
zebras and zebrawood,
are all called to join us before Thy throne
in the Divine Liturgy:

Praise ye the Lord.
Praise ye the Lord from the heavens:
praise him in the heights.
Praise ye him, all his angels:
praise ye him, all his hosts.
Praise ye him, sun and moon:
praise him, all ye stars of light.
Praise him, ye heavens of heavens,
and ye waters that be above the heavens.
Let them praise the name of the Lord:

for he commanded, and they were created.
 He hath also stablished them for ever and ever:
 he hath made a decree which shall not pass.
 Praise the Lord from the earth, ye dragons, and
 all deeps:
 Fire, and hail; snow, and vapours;
 stormy wind fulfilling his word:
 Mountains, and all hills;
 fruitful trees, and all cedars:
 Beasts, and all cattle;
 creeping things, and flying fowl:
 Kings of the earth, and all people;
 princes, and all judges of the earth:
 Both young men, and maidens;
 old men, and children:
 Let them praise the name of the Lord:
 for his name alone is excellent;
 his glory is above the earth and heaven.
 He also exalteth the horn of his people,
 the praise of all his saints;
 even of the children of Israel,
 a people near unto him.
 Praise ye the Lord.

How can we know Christ
 as the bridge between God and mankind
 if we forget Christ
 as the bridge between God
 and his whole Creation?
 Can a wedge come between the two?
 Shall we understand the human mind
 without needing to know of the body?
 Shall we worship in liturgy at Church
 without letting it create a life of worship?
 Shall we say, "Let them eat cake?"
 of those who lack bread?
 No more can we understand Christ

as saving "Me, me, me!"
but not the whole cosmos,
of which we are head, yes,
but of which he is the greatest Head.

On what day do we proclaim:

As the prophets beheld,
as the Apostles have taught,
as the Church has received,
as the teachers have dogmatized,
as the Universe has agreed,
as Grace has shown forth,
as Truth has revealed,
as falsehood has been dissolved,
as Wisdom has presented,
as Christ awarded...
thus we declare,
thus we assert,
thus we preach
Christ our true God,
and honor as Saints
in words,
in writings,
in thoughts,
in sacrifices,
in churches,
in Holy Icons;
on the one hand
worshipping and reverencing
Christ as God and Lord,
and on the other hand
honoring as true servants
of the same Lord of all
and accordingly offering them
veneration... [*Then louder!*]
This is the Faith of the Apostles,

this is the Faith of the Fathers,
this is the Faith of the Orthodox,
this is the Faith which has established the
Universe.

Is it not the day
when we celebrate the restored icons,
because Christ became not only a human spirit,
but became man,
entering the Creation,
the Word become matter,
taking on himself all that that entails.

And all that that entails
means that Christ became matter
and that matter is to be
glorified in his triumph,
the same Christ
whose physical body was transfigured
and shone with the Light of Heaven itself
and this was not an opposite
of what is to be normal
but rather transformed what is normal
so that our embodiment is to be our glory.
And this Christ,
who lived as a particular man,
in a particular place,
honored every time and place,
as the Nobel Prize for physics
honors not simply one chosen physicist per year,
but in its spirit
honors the whole enterprise of physics.
When Christ entered a here and now,
he honored every here and now,
and the Sunday of the restoration of icons
is not "The Sunday of Icons"
but

"The Sunday of Orthodoxy."
Christ was not a "generic" man
with no real time or place.
Christ entered a here and now
and his saints entered a here and now
and if he became what we are,
that we might become what he is,
the divine become human
that the human might become divine,
then if we are not to divide the Christ,
or truncate the Christ,
then his victory extends
to spirit shining through matter
in icons.
How can we praise Thee for this, O Lord?

Is not it all born up
in the scandal of the particular,
and we remember the woman in whom Heaven and Earth
met,
who cannot be separated from the Church,
nor from the Cosmos,
to whom we sing
with the beauty of Creation?

Shall we recall his work in Creation
in the song to the woman
in whom Heaven and Earth met?

I shall open my mouth,
and the Spirit will inspire it,
and I shall utter the words of my song
to the Queen and Mother:
I shall be seen radiantly keeping
feast and joyfully praising her wonders.

Most holy Theotokos, save us.

Beholding thee,
the living book of Christ,
sealed by the Spirit,
the great archangel exclaimed to thee,
O pure one:
Rejoice, vessel of joy,
through which the curse
of the first mother is annulled.

Most holy Theotokos, save us.

Rejoice, Virgin bride of God,
restoration of Adam and death of hell.
Rejoice, all-immaculate one,
palace of the King of all.
Rejoice, fiery throne of the Almighty.

Glory to the Father,
and to the Son,
and to the Holy Spirit.

Rejoice, O thou who alone
hast blossomed forth the unfading Rose.
Rejoice, for thou hast borne the fragrant Apple.
Rejoice, Maiden unwedded,
the pure fragrance of the only King,
and preservation of the world.

Both now and ever,
and unto the ages of ages.
Amen.

Rejoice, treasure-house of purity,
by which we have risen from our fall.

Rejoice, sweet-smelling lily
which perfumeth the faithful,
fragrant incense and most precious myrrh.

O Mother of God,
thou living and plentiful fount,
give strength to those
united in spiritual fellowship,
who sing hymns of praise to thee:
and in thy divine glory
vouchsafe unto them crowns of glory.

Most holy Theotokos, save us.

From thee, the untilled field,
hath grown the divine Ear of grain.
Rejoice, living table
that hath held the Bread of Life.
Rejoice, O Lady, never-failing
spring of the Living Water.

Most holy Theotokos, save us.

O Heifer that barest the unblemished Calf
for the faithful, rejoice,
Ewe that hast brought forth the lamb of God
Who taketh away the sins of all the world.
Rejoice, ardent mercy-seat.

Glory to the Father,
and to the Son,
and to the Holy Spirit.

Rejoice brightest dawn,
who alone barest Christ the Sun.
Rejoice, dwelling-place of Light,

who hast dispersed darkness
and utterly driven away
the gloomy demons.

Both now, and ever,
and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

Rejoice, only door through
which the Word alone hath passed.
By thy birthgiving, O Lady,
thou hast broken the bars and gates of hell.
Rejoice, Bride of God,
divine entry of the saved.

He who sitteth in glory
upon the throne of the Godhead,
Jesus the true God,
is come in a swift cloud
and with His sinless hands
he hath saved those who cry:
Glory to Thy power, O Christ.

Most holy Theotokos, save us.

With voices of song in faith
we cry aloud to thee,
who art worthy of all praise:
Rejoice, butter mountain,
mountain curdled by the Spirit.
Rejoice, candlestick and vessel of manna,
which sweeteneth the senses of all the pious.

Most holy Theotokos, save us.

Rejoice, mercy-seat of the world,
most pure Lady.

Rejoice, ladder raising all men
from the earth by grace.
Rejoice, bridge that in very truth
hast led from death to life
all those that hymn thee.

Most holy Theotokos, save us.

Rejoice, most pure one,
higher than the heavens,
who didst painlessly carry within thy womb
the Fountain of the earth.
Rejoice, sea-shell that with thy
blood didst dye a divine purple robe
for the King of Hosts.

Glory to the Father,
and to the Son,
and to the Holy Spirit.

Rejoice, Lady who in truth
didst give birth to the lawgiver,
Who freely washed clean
the iniquities of all.
O Maiden who hast not known wedlock,
unfathomable depth, unutterable height,
by whom we have been deified.

Both now, and ever,
and unto the ages of ages.
Amen.

Praising thee who hast woven
for the world a Crown
not made by hand of man,
we cry to thee:

Rejoice, O Virgin,
the guardian of all men,
fortress and stronghold and sacred refuge.

The whole world was amazed
at thy divine glory:
for thou, O Virgin
who hast not known wedlock,
hast held in thy womb
the God of all
and hast given birth
to an eternal Son,
who rewards with salvation
all who sing thy praises.

Most holy Theotokos, save us.

Rejoice, most immaculate one,
who gavest birth to the Way of life,
and who savedst the world
from the flood of sin.
Rejoice, Bride of God, tidings
fearful to tell and hear.
Rejoice, dwelling-place of the Master
of all creation.

Most holy Theotokos, save us.

Rejoice, most pure one,
the strength and fortress of men,
sanctuary of glory,
the death of hell,
all-radiant bridal chamber.
Rejoice, joy of angels.
Rejoice, helper of them
that pray to thee with faith.

Most holy Theotokos, save us.

Rejoice, O Lady,
fiery chariot of the Word,
living paradise,
having in thy midst
the Tree of Life,
the Lord of Life,
Whose sweetness vivifieth
all who partake of Him
with faith, though they
have been subject to corruption.

Glory to the Father,
and to the Son,
and to the Holy Spirit.

Strengthened by thy might,
we raise our cry
to thee with faith:
Rejoice, city of the King of all,
of which things glorious and worthy to be heard
were clearly spoken.
Rejoice, unhewn mountain,
unfathomed depth.

Both now, and ever,
and unto the ages of ages.
Amen.

Rejoice, most pure one,
spacious tabernacle of the Word,
shell which produced
the divine Pearl.
Rejoice, all-wondrous Theotokos,
who dost reconcile with God

all who ever call thee blessed.

As we celebrate this sacred
and solemn feast
of the Mother of God,
let us come, clapping our hands,
O people of the Lord,
and give glory to God who
was born of her.

Most holy Theotokos, save us.

O undefiled bridal chamber of the Word,
cause of deification for all,
rejoice, all honorable preaching
of the prophet;
rejoice, adornment of the apostles.

Most holy Theotokos, save us.

From thee hath come
the Dew that quenched
the flame of idolatry;
therefore, we cry to thee:
Rejoice, living fleece wet
with dew,
which Gideon saw of old,
O Virgin.

Glory to the Father,
and to the Son,
and to the Holy Spirit.

Behold, to thee, O Virgin,
we cry: Rejoice!
Be thou the port and a haven

for all that sail
upon the troubled waters of affliction,
amidst all the snares of the enemy.

Both now, and ever,
and unto the ages of ages.
Amen.

Thou cause of joy,
endue our thoughts with grace,
that we may cry to thee:
Rejoice, unconsumed bush,
cloud of light
that unceasingly overshadowest the faithful.

The holy children
bravely trampled upon the threatening fire,
refusing to worship created things
in place of the Creator,
and they sang in joy:
'Blessed art Thou and
praised above all,
O Lord God of our Fathers.

Most holy Theotokos, save us.

We sing of thee, saying aloud:
Rejoice, chariot of the noetic Sun;
true vine, that hast produced ripe grapes,
from which floweth a wine making glad
the souls of them that in faith glorify thee.

Most holy Theotokos, save us.

Rejoice, Bride of God,
who gavest birth

to the Healer of all;
mystical staff,
that didst blossom with the unfading Flower.
Rejoice, O Lady,
through whom we are filled
with joy and inherit life.

Most holy Theotokos, save us.

No tongue, however eloquent,
hath power to sing thy praises, O Lady;
for above the seraphim art thou exalted,
who gavest birth to Christ the King,
Whom do thou beseech
to deliver from all harm
those that venerate thee in faith.

Glory to the Father,
and to the Son,
and to the Holy Spirit.

The ends of the earth
praise thee and call thee blessed,
and they cry to thee
with love:
Rejoice, pure scroll,
upon which the Word was written
by the finger of the Father.
Do thou beseech Him
to inscribe thy servants
in the book of life, O Theotokos.

Both now, and ever,
and unto the ages of ages.
Amen.

We thy servants pray to thee
and bend the knees of our hearts:
Incline thine ear, O pure one;
save thy servants who are always sinking,
and preserve thy city
from every enemy captivity, O Theotokos.

The Offspring of the Theotokos
saved the holy children in the furnace.
He who was then prefigured
hath since been born on earth,
and he gathers all the creation to sing:
O all ye works of the Lord,
praise ye the Lord and exalt Him
above all for ever.

Most holy Theotokos, save us.

Within thy womb
thou hast received the Word;
thou hast carried Him who carrieth all;
O pure one, thou hast fed with milk
Him Who by His beck feedeth the whole world.
To Him we sing:
Sing to the Lord,
all ye His works,
and supremely exalt
Him unto the ages.

Most holy Theotokos, save us.

Moses perceived in the burning bush
the great mystery of thy childbearing,
while the youths clearly prefigured it
as they stood in the midst of the fire
and were not burnt,

O Virgin pure and inviolate.
Therefore do we hymn thee
and supremely exalt thee unto the ages.

Most holy Theotokos, save us.

We who once through falsehood
were stripped naked,
have by thy childbearing been clothed
in the robe of incorruption;
and we who once sat in the darkness of sin
have seen the light, O Maiden,
dwelling-place of Light.
Therefore do we hymn thee
and supremely exalt thee unto the ages.

Glory to the Father,
and to the Son,
and to the Holy Spirit.

Through thee the dead are brought to life,
for thou hast borne the Hypostatic Life.
They who once were mute
are now made to speak well;
lepers are cleansed,
diseases are driven out,
the hosts of the spirits of the air are conquered,
O Virgin, the salvation of men.

Both now, and ever,
and unto the ages of ages.
Amen.

Thou didst bear the salvation of the world,
O pure one, and through thee we
were lifted from earth to heaven.

Rejoice, all-blessed, protection and strength,
rampart and fortress of those who sing:
O all ye works of the Lord,
praise ye the Lord
and supremely exalt Him unto the ages.

Let every mortal born on earth,
radiant with light,
in spirit leap for joy;
and let the host of the angelic powers
celebrate and honor the holy feast
of the Mother of God, and let them cry:
Rejoice! Pure and blessed Ever-Virgin,
who gavest birth to God.

Most holy Theotokos, save us.

Let us, the faithful, call to thee:
Rejoice! Through thee, O Maiden, we have
become partakers of everlasting joy.
Save us from temptations, from barbarian
captivity, and from every other injury
that befalleth sinful men
because of the multitude of their transgressions.

Most holy Theotokos, save us.

Thou hast appeared as our
enlightenment and confirmation;
wherefore, we cry to thee:
Rejoice, never-setting star
that bringest into the world
the great Sun. Rejoice, pure Virgin
that didst open the closed Eden.
Rejoice, pillar of fire,
leading mankind to a higher life.

Most holy Theotokos, save us.

Let us stand with reverence
in the house of our God,
and let us cry aloud:
Rejoice, Mistress of the world.
Rejoice, Mary, Lady of us all.
Rejoice, thou who alone art immaculate
and fair among women.
Rejoice, vessel that receivedst
the inexhaustible myrrh poured out on thee.

Glory to the Father,
and to the Son,
and to the Holy Spirit.

Thou dove that hast borne the Merciful One,
rejoice, ever-virgin!
Rejoice, glory of all the saints.
Rejoice, crown of martyrs.
Rejoice, divine adornment
of all the righteous
and salvation of us the faithful.

Both now, and ever,
and unto the ages of ages.
Amen.

Spare Thine inheritance, O God,
and pass over all our sins now,
for as intercessor in Thy sight,
O Christ, Thou hast her that on earth
gave birth to Thee without seed,
when in Thy great mercy
Thou didst will to take the form of man.

To Thee, the Champion Leader,
we Thy servants dedicate
a feast of victory and of thanksgiving
as ones rescued out of sufferings,
O Theotokos:
but as Thou art one with might which is
invincible,
from all dangers that can be
do Thou deliver us,
that we may cry to Thee:
Rejoice, Thou Bride Unwedded!

To her is sung:

More honorable than the cherubim,
and more glorious beyond compare than the
seraphim,
thou baredst God the Word.
True Mother of God,
we magnify thee.

Shall we praise thee
for the beauty of a woman
with a child in her arms,
or a child nestled in her womb?

Mary is the one whose womb
contained the uncontainable God.

When that happened,
she gave him his humanity,
and there was an exchange of gifts.

Once you understand this exchange,
it changes everything.

She gave him
his humanity.
He gave her
grace,
the divine life,
as none before her
and none after.

The cherubim and seraphim are the highest ranks of angels.
'Seraph' means fiery one
and they stand most immediately in God's presence.

What is this fire?
Is it literal heat from a real fire?
Or is it something deeper,
something more fire-like than fire itself?
Would not someone who understood the seraphim
as the highest angels,
angels that burn,
would instead ask if our "real" fires
are truly real?
Is it emotion?
Or is it not "emotion"
as we understand the term,
as "deep love"
is not "hypocritical politeness"
as we understand the term?
Or yet still more alien?

Is there anything in our visible Creation
that can explain this?

If a man were to be exposed to this fire,
and he were not destroyed that instant,
he would throw himself into burning glass
to cool himself.

And yet an instant
of direct touch with God the Father,
were that even possible,
would incinerate the seraphim.

Then how can we approach God?

The bridge between Heaven and Earth:
the Word by which the Father is known,
the perfect visible image of the invisible God,
who has become part of his Creation.

When we look at the Christ, the Bridge,
and see the perfect image of God,
God looks at Christ, the Bridge,
and sees the perfect image
of mankind
and not merely mankind,
but inseparably the whole Creation.

How shall we worship the Father,
fire beyond fire beyond fire?

How shall we worship God,
holy, holy, holy?

It is a mystery.
It is impossible.
And yet it happens
in one who was
absolutely God and absolutely man,
and one who is
absolutely God and absolutely man,
bringing Heaven down to Earth,
sharing our humanity
that we might share in his divinity,

and bring Heaven down to Earth,
that Earth may be brought up to Heaven.

There is a mystic likeness
between
Mary, the Mother of God,
the Church,
and the world,
feminine beauty
created, headed, and served
by a masculine revealed God
whom no one can measure.
His Light is incomparably more glorious;
we can know the energies from God
but never know God's essence,
and yet to ask that question is
the wrong way of looking at it.
It is like asking,
"Which would you choose:
Compassion for your neighbor or common decency,
Being a good communicator or using language well,
Living simply or not wasting electricity?"

Christ and the Church are one,
a single organism,
and in that organism,
the rule is one unified organism,
not two enemies fighting for the upper hand.
I am one of the faithful,
and the clergy are not clergy at my expense.
We are one organism.
The Gift of the Eucharist does not happen,
except that it be celebrated by a priest,
and except that the people say, "Amen!"
The Church in its fullness is present
where at least one bishop or priest is found,
and at least one faithful—

and without the faithful,
the clergy are not fully the Church.
The "official" priest is priest,
not instead of a priestly call among the faithful,
but precisely as the crystallization of a priesthood in which
there is no male nor female,
red nor yellow nor black nor white,
rich nor poor, but Christ is all,
and is in all, with no first or second class faithful.
Every Orthodox,
every Christian,
every person
is called to be
part of a single united organism,
a royal priesthood,
a chosen people,
more than conquerors,
a Church of God's eclecticism,
made divine
a family of little Christs,
sons to God and brothers to Christ,
the ornament of Creation, visible and invisible,
called to lead the whole Creation
loved into being by God,
to be in love
that to God they may return.

So what can we do,
save to give thanks
for rocks and trees,
stars and seas,
pencils and pine trees,
man and beast,
faces and embraces,
solitude and community,
symphonies and sandcastles,
language and listening,

ivy vines and ivy league,
cultures and clues,
incense and inspiration,
song and chant,
the beauty of nature
and the nature of beauty,
the good, the true, and the beautiful,
healing of soul and body,
the spiritual struggle,
repentance from sin
and the freedom it brings,
and a path to walk, a Way,
one that we will never exhaust—
what can we do
but bow down in worship?

Glory be
to the Father,
and the Son,
and the Holy Spirit,
both now and ever,
and to the ages of ages.
Amen.