

# THE APOSTLES' CREED

by St. Thomas Aquinas

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## PROLOGUE

### What Is Faith?

The Nature and Effects of Faith.—The first thing that is necessary for every Christian is faith, without which no one is truly called a faithful Christian. Faith brings about four good effects. The first is that through faith the soul is united to God, and by it there is between the soul and God a union akin to marriage. “I will espouse you in faith” [Hosea 2:20]. When a man is baptized the first question that is asked him is: “Do you believe in God?” This is because Baptism is the first Sacrament of faith. Hence, the Lord said: “He who believes and is baptized shall be saved” [Mk 16:16]. Baptism without faith is of no value. Indeed, it must be known that no one is acceptable before God unless he have faith. “Without faith it is impossible to please

God”[Heb 11:6]. St. Augustine explains these words of St. Paul, “All that is not of faith is sin” [Rom 14:23], in this way: “Where there is no knowledge of the eternal and unchanging Truth, virtue even in the midst of the best moral life is false.”

The second effect of faith is that eternal life is already begun in us; for eternal life is nothing else than knowing God. This the Lord announced when He said: “This is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you sent.” [Jn 17:3]. This knowledge of God begins here through faith, but it is perfected the future life when we shall know God as He is. Therefore, St. Paul says: “Faith is the substance of things to be hoped for” [Heb 11:1]. No one then can arrive at perfect happiness of heaven, which is the true knowledge of God, unless first he knows God through faith. “Blessed are they who have not seen and have believed” [Jn 20:29].

The third good that comes from faith is that right direction which it gives to our present life. Now, in order that one live a good life, it is necessary that he know what is necessary to live rightly; and if he depends for all this required knowledge on his own efforts alone, either he will never attain such knowledge, or if so, only after a long time. But faith teaches us all that is necessary to live a good life. It teaches us that there is one God who is the rewarder of good and the punisher of evil; that there is a life other than this one, and other like truths whereby we are attracted to live rightly and to avoid what evil. “The just man lives by faith”[Hab 2:4]. This is evident in that no one of the philosophers before the coming of Christ could, through his own powers, know God and the means necessary for salvation as well as any old woman since Christ’s coming knows Him through faith. And, therefore, it is said in Isaiah that “the earth is filled with the knowledge of the Lord” [11:9].

The fourth effect of faith is that by it we overcome temptations: “The holy ones by faith conquered kingdoms” [Heb 11:33]. We know that every temptation is either from the world or the flesh or the devil. The devil would have us disobey God and not be subject to Him. This is removed by faith, since through it we know that He is the Lord of all things and must therefore be obeyed. “Your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, goes about seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, strong in faith” [1 Pet 5:8]. The world tempts us either by attaching us to it in prosperity, or by filling us with fear of adversity. But faith overcomes this in that we believe in a life to come better than this one, and hence we despise the riches of this world and we are not terrified in the face of adversity. “This is the victory which overcomes the

world: our faith" [1 Jn 5:4]. The flesh, however, tempts us by attracting us to the swiftly passing pleasures of this present life. But faith shows us that, if we cling to these things inordinately, we shall lose eternal joys. "In all things taking the shield of faith" [Eph 6:16]. We see from this that it is very necessary to have faith.

"The Evidence of Things that Appear Not."—But someone will say that it is foolish to believe what is not seen, and that one should not believe in things that he cannot see. I answer by saying that the imperfect nature of our intellect takes away the basis of this difficulty. For if man of himself could in a perfect manner know all things visible and invisible, it would indeed be foolish to believe what he does not see. But our manner of knowing is so weak that no philosopher could perfectly investigate the nature of even one little fly. We even read that a certain philosopher spent thirty years in solitude in order to know the nature of the bee. If, therefore, our intellect is so weak, it is foolish to be willing to believe concerning God only that which man can know by himself alone. And against this is the word of Job:

"Behold, God is great, exceeding our knowledge" [Job 36:26]. One can also answer this question by supposing that a certain master had said something concerning his own special branch of knowledge, and some uneducated person would contradict him for no other reason than that he could not understand what the master said! Such a person would be considered very foolish. So, the intellect of the Angels as greatly exceeds the intellect of the greatest philosopher as much as that of the greatest philosopher exceeds the intellect of the uneducated man. Therefore, the philosopher is foolish if he refuses to believe what an Angel says, and far greater fool to refuse to believe what God says. Against such are these words: "For many things are shown to you above the understanding of men" [Sir 3:25].

Then, again, if one were willing to believe only those things which one knows with certitude, one could not live in this world. How could one live unless one believed others? How could one know that this man is one's own father? Therefore, it is necessary that one believe others in matters which one cannot know perfectly for oneself. But no one is so worthy of belief as is God, and hence they who do not believe the words of faith are not wise, but foolish and proud. As the Apostle says: "He is proud, knowing nothing" [1 Tim 6:4]. And also: "I know whom I have believed; and I am certain" [2 Tim 1:12]. And it is written: "You who fear the Lord, believe Him and your reward shall not be made void" [Sir 2:8]. Finally, one can say also that God proves the truth of the things which faith teaches. Thus, if a king sends letters signed with his seal, no one would dare to say that those letters did

not represent the will of the king. In like manner, everything that the Saints believed and handed down to us concerning the faith of Christ is signed with the seal of God. This seal consists of those works which no mere creature could accomplish; they are the miracles by which Christ confirmed the sayings of the apostles and of the Saints.

If, however, you would say that no one has witnessed these miracles, I would reply in this manner. It is a fact that the entire world worshipped idols and that the faith of Christ was persecuted, as the histories of the pagans also testify. But now all are turned to Christ—wise men and noble and rich—converted by the words of the poor and simple preachers of Christ. Now, this fact was either miracle or it was not. If it is miraculous, you have what you asked for, a visible fact; if it is not, then there could not be a greater miracle than that the whole world should have been converted without miracles. And we need go no further. We are more certain, therefore, in believing the things of faith than those things which can be seen, because God's knowledge never deceives us, but the visible sense of man is often in error.

#### ARTICLE 1

"I Believe in One God, the Father the Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth."

Among all the truths which the faithful must believe, this is the first— that there is one God. We must see that God means the ruler and provider of all things. He, therefore, believes in God who believes that everything in this world is governed and provided for by Him. He who would believe that all things come into being by chance does not believe that there is a God. No one is so foolish as to deny that all nature, which operates with a certain definite time and order, is subject to the rule and foresight and an orderly arrangement of someone. We see how the sun, the moon, and the stars, and all natural things follow a determined course, which would be impossible if they were merely products of chance. Hence, as is spoken of in the Psalm, he is indeed foolish who does not believe in God: "The fool said in his heart: There is no God" [Ps 13:1].

There are those, however, who believe that God rules and sustains all things of nature, and nevertheless do not believe God is the overseer of the acts of man; hence they believe that human acts do not come under God's providence. They reason thus because they see in this world how the good are afflicted and how the evil enjoy good things, so that Divine Providence seems to disregard human affairs. Hence the words of Job are offered to apply to this view: "He does not consider our things; and He walks about the

poles of heaven” [22:14]. But this is indeed absurd. It is just as though a person who is ignorant of medicine should see a doctor give water to one patient and wine to another. He would believe that this is mere chance, since he does not understand the science of medicine which for good reasons prescribes for one wine and for another water. So is it with God. For God in His just and wise Providence knows what is good and necessary for men; and hence He afflicts some who are good and allows certain wicked men to prosper. But he is foolish indeed who believes this is due to chance, because he does not know the causes and method of God’s dealing with men. “I wish that God might speak with you, and would open His lips to you, that He might show you the secrets of wisdom, and that His law is manifold: and you might understand that He exacts much less of you than your iniquity deserves” [Job 11:5-6].

We must, therefore, firmly believe that God governs and regulates not only all nature, but also the actions of men. “And they said: The Lord shall not see; neither shall the God of Jacob understand. Understand, ye senseless among the people, and, you fools, be wise at last. He who planted the ear, shall He not hear, He who formed the eye, does He not consider?... The Lord knows the thoughts of men” [Ps 93:7-11]. God sees all things, both our thoughts and the hidden desires of our will. Thus, the necessity of doing good is especially imposed on man since all his thoughts, words and actions are known in the sight of God: “All things are naked and open to His eyes” [Heb 4:13].

We believe that God who rules and regulates all things is but one God. This is seen in that wherever the regulation of human affairs is well arranged, there the group is found to be ruled and provided for by one, not many. For a number of heads often brings dissension in their subjects. But since divine government exceeds in every way that which is merely human, it is evident that the government of the world is not by many gods, but by one only.

Motives for believing in many gods

There are four motives which have led men to believe in a number of gods:

(1) The dullness of the human intellect. Dull men, not capable of going beyond sensible things, did not believe anything existed except physical bodies. Hence, they held that the world is disposed and ruled by those bodies which to them seemed most beautiful and most valuable in this world. And, accordingly, to things such as the sun, the moon and the stars, they attributed and gave a divine worship. Such men are like to one who, going to a royal court to see the king, believes that whoever is sumptuously dressed or of official position is the king! “They have imagined either the sun

and moon or the circle of the stars... to be the gods that rule the world. With whose beauty, if they being delighted, took them to be gods..." [Wis 7:2-3].

(2) The second motive was human adulation. Some men, wishing to fawn upon kings and rulers, obey and subject themselves to them and show them honor which is due to God alone. After the death of these rulers, sometimes men make them gods, and sometimes this is done even whilst they are living. "That every nation may know that Nabuchodonosor is god of the earth, and besides him there is no other" [Judith 5:29].

(3) The human affection for sons and relatives was a third motive. Some, because of the excessive love which they had for their family, caused statues of them to be erected after their death, and gradually a divine honor was attached to these statues. "For men serving either their affections or their kings, gave the incommunicable Name to stones and wood" [Wis 14:21].

(4) The last motive is the malice of the devil. The devil wished from the beginning to be equal to God, and thus he said: "I will ascend above the height of the clouds. I will be like the Most High" [Is 14:14]. The devil still entertains this desire. His entire purpose is to bring about that man adore him and offer sacrifices to him; not that he takes delight in a dog or cat that is offered to him, he does relish the fact that thereby irreverence is shown to God. Thus, he spoke to Christ: "All these will I give you, if you fall down and adore me" [Mt 4:9]. For this reason those demons who entered into idols said that they would be venerated as gods. "All the gods of the Gentiles are demons" [Ps 105:5]. "The things which the heathens sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God" [1 Cor 10:20].

Although all this is terrible to contemplate, yet at times there are any who fall into these above-mentioned four causes. Not by their words and hearts, but by their actions, they show that they believe in many gods. Thus, those who believe that the celestial bodies influence the will of man and regulate their affairs by astrology, really make the heavenly bodies gods, and subject themselves to them. "Be not afraid of the signs of heaven which the heathens fear. For the laws of the people are vain" [Jer 10:2-3]. In the same category are all those who obey temporal rulers more than God, in that which they ought not; such actually set these up as gods. "We ought to obey God rather than men" [Acts 5:29]. So also those who love their sons and kinsfolk more than God show by their actions that they believe in many gods; as likewise do those who love food more than God: "Whose god is their belly" [Phil 3:19]. Moreover, all who take part in magic or in incantations believe that the demons are gods, because they seek from the

devil that which God alone can give, such as revealing the future or discovering hidden things. We must, therefore, believe that there is but one God.

It has been shown that we must first of all believe there is but one God. Now, the second is that this God is the Creator and maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible. Let us leave more subtle reasons for the present and show by a simple example that all things are created and made by God. If a person, upon entering a certain house, should feel a warmth at the door of the house, and going within should feel a greater warmth, and so on the more he went into its interior, he would believe that somewhere within was a fire, even if he did not see the fire itself which caused this heat which he felt. So also is it when we consider the things of this world. For one finds all things arranged in different degrees of beauty and worth, and the closer things approach to God, the more beautiful and better they are found to be. Thus, the heavenly bodies are more beautiful and nobler than those which are below them; and, likewise, the invisible things in relation to the visible. Therefore, it must be seen that all these things proceed from one God who gives His being and beauty to each and everything. "All men are vain, in whom there is not the knowledge of God: and who by these good things that are seen could not understand Him that is. Neither by attending to the works have acknowledged who was the workman.... For by the greatness of the beauty, and of the creature, the creator of them may be seen, so as to be known thereby" [Wis 13:1,5]. Thus, therefore, it is certain for us that all things in the world are from God.

### Errors

There are three errors concerning this truth which we must avoid. First, the error of the Manicheans, who say that all visible created things are from the devil, and only the invisible creation is to be attributed to God. The cause of this error is that they hold that God is the highest good, which is true; but they also assert that whatsoever comes from good is itself good. Thus, not distinguishing what is evil and what is good, they believed that whatever is partly evil is essentially evil—as, for instance, fire because it burns is essentially evil, and so is water because it causes suffocation, and so with other things. Because no sensible thing is essentially good, but mixed with evil and defective, they believed that all visible things are not made by God who is good, but by the evil one. Against them St. Augustine gives this illustration. A certain man entered the shop of a carpenter and found tools which, if he should fall against them, would seriously wound him. Now, if he would consider the carpenter a bad workman because he made and used

such tools, it would be stupid of him indeed. In the same way it is absurd to say that created things are evil because they may be harmful; for what is harmful to one may be useful to another. This error is contrary to the faith of the Church, and against it we say: "Of all things visible and invisible" [Nicene Creed]. "In the beginning God created heaven and earth" [Gen 1:1]. "All things were made by Him" [Jn 1:3].

The second error is of those who hold the world has existed from eternity: "Since the time that the fathers slept, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation" [2 Pet 3:4]. They are led to this view because they do not know how to imagine the beginning of the world. They are, says Rabbi Moses, in like case to a boy who immediately upon his birth was placed upon an island, and remained ignorant of the manner of child-bearing and of infants' birth. Thus, when he grew up, if one should explain all these things to him, he would not believe how a man could once have been in his mother's womb. So also those who consider the world as it is now, do not believe that it had a beginning. This is also contrary to the faith of the Church, and hence we say: "the Maker of heaven and earth." For if they were made, they did not exist forever. "He spoke and they were made" [Ps 148:5 ].

The third is the error which holds that God made the world from pre-existing matter (*ex praejacenti materia*). They are led to this view because they wish to measure divine power according to human power; and since man cannot make anything except from material which already lies at hand, so also it must be with God. But this is false. Man needs matter to make anything, because he is a builder of particular things and must bring form out of definite material. He merely determines the form of his work, and can be only the cause of the form that he builds. God, however, is the universal cause of all things, and He not only creates the form but also the matter. Hence, He makes out of nothing, and thus it is said in the Creed: "the Creator of heaven and earth." We must see in this the difference between making and creating. To create is to make something out of nothing; and if everything were destroyed, He could again make all things. He, thus, makes the blind to see, raises up the dead, and works other similar miracles. "Your power is at hand when You will" [Wis 12:18].

### Benefits

From a consideration of all this, one is led to a fivefold benefit. (1) We are led to a knowledge of the divine majesty. Now, if a maker is greater than the things he makes, then God is greater than all things which He has made. "With whose beauty, if they being delighted, took them to be gods, let them



know how much the Lord of them is more beautiful than they... Or if they admired their power and their effects, let them understand by them that He that made them, is mightier than they" [Wis 13:3-4]. Hence, whatsoever can even be affirmed or thought of is less than God. "Behold: God is great, exceeding our knowledge" [Job 36:26].

(2) We are led to give thanks to God. Because God is the Creator of all things, it is certain that what we are and what we have is from God: "What do you have that you did not receive?" [1 Cor 4:7]. "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof; the world and all who dwell on it" [Ps 23:1]. "We, therefore, must give thanks to God: What shall I render to the Lord for all the things that He has done for me?" [Ps 115:12].

(3) We are led to bear our troubles in patience. Although every created thing is from God and is good according to its nature, yet, if something harms us or brings us pain, we believe that such comes from God, not as a fault in Him, but because God permits no evil that is not for good. Affliction purifies from sin, brings low the guilty, and urges on the good to a love of God: "If we have received good things from the hand of God, why should we not receive evil?" [Job 2:10].

(4) We are led to a right use of created things. Thus, we ought to use created things as having been made by God for two purposes: for His glory, "since all things are made for Himself" [Prov 16:4] (that is, for the glory of God), and finally for our profit: "Which the Lord your God created for the service of all the nations" [Deut 4:19]. Thus, we ought to use things for God's glory in order to please Him no less than for our own profit, that is, so as to avoid sin in using them: All things are yours, and we have given you what we received of your hand" [1 Chron 29:14]. Whatever we have, be it learning or beauty, we must revere all and use all for the glory of God.

(5) We are led also to acknowledge the great dignity of man. God made all things for man: "You subjected all things under his feet" [Ps 8:8], and man is more like to God than all other creatures save the Angels: "Let us make man to Our image and likeness" [Gen 1:26]. God does not say this of the heavens or of the stars, but of man; and this likeness of God in man does not refer to the body but to the human soul, which has free will and is incorruptible, and therein man resembles God more than other creatures do. We ought, therefore, to consider the nobleness of man as less than the Angels but greater than all other creatures. Let us not, therefore, diminish his dignity by sin and by an inordinate desire for earthly things which are beneath us and are made for our service. Accordingly, we must rule over

things of the earth and use them, and be subject to God by obeying and serving Him. And thus we shall come to the enjoyment of God forever.

## ARTICLE 2

“And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord.”

It is not only necessary for Christians to believe in one God who is the Creator of heaven and earth and of all things; but also they must believe that God is the Father and that Christ is the true Son of God. This, as St. Peter says, is not mere fable, but is certain and proved by the word of God on the Mount of Transfiguration. “For we have not by following artificial fables made known to you the power and presence of our Lord Jesus Christ; but we were eyewitnesses of His greatness. For He received from God the Father honor and glory, this voice coming down to Him from the excellent glory: ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Listen to Him.’ And this voice, we heard brought from heaven, when we were with Him in the holy mount” [2 Pet 1:16]. Christ Jesus Himself in many places called God His Father, and Himself the Son of God. Both the Apostles and the Fathers placed in the articles of faith that Christ is the Son of God by saying: “And (I believe) in Jesus Christ, His (i.e., God’s) only Son”.

## Errors

There were, however, certain heretics who erred in this belief. Photinus, for instance, believed that Christ is not the Son of God but a good man who, by a good life and by doing the will of God, merited to be called the son of God by adoption; and so Christ who lived a good life and did the will of God merited to be called the son of God. Moreover, this error would not have Christ living before the Blessed Virgin, but would have Him begin to exist only at His conception. Accordingly, there are here two errors: the first, that Christ is not the true Son of God according to His nature; and the second, that Christ in His entire being began to exist in time. Our faith, however, holds that He is the Son of God in His nature, and that he is from all eternity. Now, we have definite authority against these errors in the Holy Scriptures, Against the first error it is said that Christ is not only the Son, but also the only-begotten Son of the Father: “The only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him:” [Jn 1:18]. And again the second error it is said: “Before Abraham was made, I AM” [Jn 8:58]. It is evident that Abraham lived before the Blessed Virgin. And what the Fathers added to the other [Nicene] Creed, namely, “the only-begotten Son of God,” is against the first error; and “born of the Father before all ages” is against the second error.

Sabellius said that Christ indeed was before the Blessed Virgin, but he held that the Father Himself became incarnate and, therefore, the Father and the Son is the same Person. This is an error because it takes away the Trinity of Persons in God, and against it is this authority: "I am not alone, but I and the Father who sent Me" [Jn 8:16]. It is clear that one cannot be sent from himself. Sabellius errs therefore, and in the [Nicene] Creed of the Fathers it is said: "God of God; Light of Light," that is, we are to believe in God the Son from God the Father, and the Son who is Light from the Father who is Light.

Arius, although he would say that Christ was before the Blessed Virgin and that the Person of the Father is other than the Person of the Son, nevertheless made a three-fold attribution to Christ: (1) that the Son of God was a creature; (2) that He is not from eternity, but was formed the noblest of all creatures in time by God; (3) that God the Son is not of one nature with God the Father, and therefore that He was not true God. But this too is erroneous and contrary to the teaching of the Holy Scriptures. It is written: "I and the Father are one" [Jn 10:30]. That is, in nature; and therefore, just as the Father always existed, so also the Son; and just as the Father is true God, so also is the Son. That Christ is a creature, as said by Arius, is contradicted in the "Symbol" by the Fathers: "True God of true God;" and the assertion that Christ is not from eternity but in time is also contrary to the [Nicene] Creed: "Begotten not made;" and finally, that Christ is not of the same substance as the Father is denied by the [Nicene] Creed: "Consubstantial with the Father."

The truth

It is, therefore, clear we must believe that Christ is the Only-begotten of God, and the true Son of God, who always was with the Father, and that there is one Person of the Son and another of the Father who have the same divine nature. All this we believe now through faith, but we shall know it with a perfect vision in the life eternal. Hence, we shall now speak somewhat of this for our own edification.

It must be known that different things have different modes of generation. The generation of God is different from that of other things. Hence, we cannot arrive at a notion of divine generation except through the generation of that created thing which more closely approaches to a likeness to God. We have seen that nothing approaches in likeness to God more than the human soul. The manner of generation in the soul is effected in the thinking process in the soul of man, which is called a conceiving of the intellect. This conception takes its rise in the soul as from a father, and its effect is called

the word of the intellect or of man. In brief, the soul by its act of thinking begets the word. So also the Son of God is the Word of God, not like a word that is uttered exteriorly (for this is transitory), but as a word is interiorly conceived; and this Word of God is of the one nature as God and equal to God.

The testimony of St. John concerning the Word of God destroys these three heresies, viz., that of Photinus in the words: "In the beginning was the Word;" that of Sabellius in saying: "And the Word was with God;" and that of Arius when it says: "And the Word was God" [Jn 1:1].

But a word in us is not the same as the Word in God. In us the word is an accident; whereas in God the Word is the same as God, since there is nothing in God that is not of the essence of God. No one would say God has not a Word, because such would make God wholly without knowledge; and therefore, as God always existed, so also did His Word ever exist. Just as a sculptor works from a form which he has previously thought out, which is his word; so also God makes all things by His Word, as it were through His art: "All things were made by Him" [Jn 1:3].

Now, if the Word of God is the Son of God and all the words of God bear a certain likeness of this Word, then we ought to hear the Word of God gladly; for such is a sign that we love God. We ought also believe the word of God whereby the Word of God dwells in us, who is Christ: "That Christ may dwell by faith in your hearts" [Eph 3:17]. "And you have not His word abiding in you" [Jn 5:38]. But we ought not only to believe that the Word of God dwells in us, but also we should meditate often upon this; for otherwise we will not be benefitted to the extent that such meditation is a great help against sin: your words have I hidden in my heart, that I may not sin against You" [Ps 108:11]. Again it is said of the just man: "On His law he shall meditate day and night" [Ps 1:2]. And it is said of the Blessed Virgin that she "kept all these words, pondering them in her heart" [Lk 2:19]. Then also, one should communicate the word of God to others by advising, preaching and inflaming their hearts: "Let no evil speech proceed from your mouth; but that which is good, to the edification of faith" [Eph 4:29]. Likewise, "let the word of Christ dwell in you abundantly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another" [Col 3:16]. So also: "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, entreat, rebuke in all patience and doctrine" [2 Tim 4:2]. Finally, we ought to put the word of God into practice: "Be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves" [James 1:22].

The Blessed Virgin observed these five points when she gave birth to the Word of God. First, she heard what was said to her: "The Holy Spirit shall

come upon you” [Lk 1:35]. Then she gave her consent through faith: “Behold the handmaid of the Lord” [Lk 1:38]. And she also received and carried the Word in her womb. Then she brought forth the Word of God and, finally, she nourished and cared for Him. And so the Church sings: “Only a Virgin nourished Him who is King of the Angels” [Fourth Responsory, Office of the Circumcision, Dominican Breviary.].

### ARTICLE 3

“Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary.”

The Christian must not only believe in the Son of God, as we have seen, but also in His Incarnation. St. John, after having written of things subtle and difficult to understand, points out the Incarnation to us when he says: “And the Word was made flesh” [Jn 1:14]. Now, in order that we may understand something of this, I give two illustrations at the outset.

It is clear that there is nothing more like the Word of God than the word which is conceived in our mind but not spoken. Now, no one knows this interior word in our mind except the one who conceives it, and then it is known to others only when it is pronounced. So also as long as the Word of God was in the heart of the Father, it was not known except by the Father Himself; but when the Word assumed flesh—as a word becomes audible—then was It first made manifest and known. “Afterwards He was seen upon earth and conversed with men” [Baruch 3:38]. Another example is that, although the spoken word is known through hearing, yet it is neither seen nor touched, unless it is written on paper. So also the Word of God was made both visible and tangible when He became flesh. And as the paper upon which the word of a king is written is called the word of the king, so also Man to whom the Word of God is conjoined in one “hypostasis”. is called the Son of God. “Take a great book and write in it with a man’s pen” [Is 7:1]. Therefore, the holy Apostles affirmed: “Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary.”

### Errors

On this point there arose many errors; and the holy Fathers at the Council of Nicea added in that other Creed a number of things which suppress all these errors.

Origen said that Christ was born and came into the world to save even the devils, and, therefore, at the end of the world all the demons will be saved. But this is contrary to the Holy Scripture: Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels” [Mt 25:41]. Consequently, to remove this error they added in the Creed: “Who for us

men (not for the devils) and for our salvation, came down from heaven.” In this the love of God for us is made more apparent.

Photinus would have Christ born of the Blessed Virgin, but added that He was a mere man who by a good life in doing the will of God merited to become the son of God even as other holy men. This, too, is denied by this saying of John: “I came down from heaven, not to do My own will but the will of Him who sent Me” [Jn 6:38]. Now if Christ were not in heaven, He would not have descended from heaven, and were He a mere man, He would not have been in heaven. Hence, it is said in the Nicene Creed: “He came down from heaven.”

Manichaeus, however, said that Christ was always the Son of God and He descended from heaven, but He was not actually but only in appearance clothed in true flesh. But this is false, because it is not worthy of the Teacher of Truth to have anything to do with what is false, and just as He showed His physical Body, so it was really His: “Handle, and see; for a spirit does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have” [Lk 24:39]. To remove this error, therefore, they added: “And He was incarnate.”

Ebion, who was a Jew, said that Christ was born of the Blessed Virgin in the ordinary human way. But this is false, for the Angel said of Mary: “That which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit” [Mt 1:20]. And the holy Fathers to destroy this error, added: “By the Holy Spirit.”

Valentinus believed that Christ was conceived by the Holy Spirit, but would have the Holy Spirit deposit a heavenly body in the Blessed Virgin, so that she contributed nothing to Christ’s birth except to furnish a place for Him. Thus, he said, this Body appeared by means of the Blessed Virgin, as though she were a channel. This is a great error, for the Angel said: “And therefore also the Holy One which shall be born of you shall be called the Son of God” [Lk 1:35]. And the Apostle adds: “But when the fullness of time was come, God sent His Son, made of a woman” [Gal 4:4]. Hence the Creed says: “Born of the Virgin Mary.”

Arius and Apollinarius held that, although Christ was the Word of God and was born of the Virgin Mary, nevertheless He did not have a soul, but in place of the soul was His divinity. This is contrary to the Scripture, for Christ says: “Now is My soul troubled” [Jn 12:27]. And again: “My soul is sorrowful even unto death” [Mt 26:38]. For this reason the Fathers added: “And was made man.” Now, man is made up of body and soul. Christ had all that a true man has save sin. All the above-mentioned errors and all others that can be offered are destroyed by this, that He was made man. The error of Eutyches particularly is destroyed by it. He held that, by a commixture of the

divine nature of Christ with the human, He was neither purely divine nor purely human. This is not true, because by it Christ would not be a man. And so it is said: "He was made man." This destroys also the error of Nestorius, who said that the Son of God only by an indwelling was united to man. This, too, is false, because by this Christ would not be man but only in a man, and that He became man is clear from these words: "He was in habit found as man" [Phil 2:7]. "But now you seek to kill Me, a man who have spoken the truth to you, which I have heard of God" [Jn 8:40].

### Lessons

We can learn something from all this:

(1) Our faith is strengthened. If, for instance, someone should tell us about a certain foreign land which he himself had never seen, we would not believe him to the extent we would if he had been there. Now, before Christ came into the world, the Patriarchs and Prophets and John the Baptist told something of God; but men did not believe them as they believed Christ, who was with God, nay more, was one with God. Hence, far more firm is our faith in what is given us by Christ Himself: "No one has ever seen God; the only-begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him" [Jn 1:18]. Thus, many mysteries of our faith which before the coming of Christ were hidden from us, are now made clear.

(2) Our hope is raised up. It is certain that the Son of Man did not come to us, assuming our flesh, for any trivial cause, but for our exceeding great advantage. For He made as it were a trade with us, assuming a living body and deigning to be born of the Virgin, in order to grant us His divinity. [Cf. Mass prayer at mixing of water and wine]. And thus He became man that He might make man divine.

(3) Our charity is enkindled. There is no proof of divine charity so clear as that God, the Creator of all things, is made a creature; that Our Lord is become our brother, and that the Son of God is made the Son of man: "For God so loved the world as to give His only-begotten Son" [Jn 3:16]. Therefore, upon consideration of this our love for God ought to be re-ignited and burst into flame.

(4) This induces us to keep our souls pure. Our nature was exalted and ennobled by its union with God to the extent of being assumed into union with a Divine Person.

Indeed, after the Incarnation the Angel would not permit St. John to adore him, although he allowed this to be done before by even the greatest patriarchs [Rev 22:8]. Therefore, one who reflects on this exaltation of his nature and is ever conscious of it, should scorn to cheapen and lower

himself and his nature by sin. Thus, says St. Peter: "By these He has given us most great and precious promises; that by them you may be made partakers of the divine nature; flying the corruption of that concupiscence which is in the world" [2 Pet 1:4].

Finally, by consideration of all this, our desire to come to Christ is intensified. If a king had a brother who was away from him a long distance, that brother would desire to come to the king to see, to be with him and to abide with him. So also Christ is our brother, and we should desire to be with Him and to be united to Him. "Wherever the body shall be, there shall the eagles also gathered together" [Mt 24:28]. The Apostle desired "to be dissolved and be with Christ" [Phil 1:23]. And it is this desire which grows in us as we meditate upon the Incarnation of Christ.

#### ARTICLE 4

"Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried."

It is just as necessary for the Christian to believe in the passion and death of the Son of God as it is to believe in His Incarnation. For, as St. Gregory says, "there would have been no advantage in His having been born for us unless we had profited by His Redemption." That Christ died for us is so tremendous a fact that our intellect can scarcely grasp it; for in no way does it fall in the natural way of our understanding. This is what the Apostle says: "I work in your days, a work which you will not believe, if any man shall tell it to you" [Acts 13:41, from Hab 1:5]. The grace of God is so great and His love for us is such that we cannot understand what He has done for us.

Now, we must believe that, although Christ suffered death, yet His Godhead did not die; it was the human nature in Christ that died. For He did not die as God, but as man.

This will be clear from two examples, one of which is taken from himself. Now, when a man dies, in the separation of the soul from the body the soul does not die but the body or flesh does die. So also in the death of Christ, His Divinity did not die, but His man nature suffered death. But if the Jews did not slay the Divinity of Christ, it would seem that their sin was not any greater than if they killed any ordinary man. In answering this we say that it is as if a king were clothed only in one garment, and if someone befouled this garment, such a one has committed as grave a crime as if he had defiled the king himself. Likewise, although the Jews could not slay God, yet in putting to death the human nature which Christ assumed, they were as severely punished as if they had put the Godhead itself to death. Another example is had from what we said before, viz., that the Son of God is the Word of God, and the Word of God made flesh is like the word of a king



written on paper. So if one should tear this royal paper in pieces, it would be considered that he had rent apart the word of the king. Thus, the sin of the Jews was as grievous as if they had slain the Word of God.

Why?

But what need was there that the Son of God should suffer for us? There was a great need; and indeed it can be assigned to two reasons. The first is that it was a remedy against sin, and the second is for an example of what we ought to do. It was a remedy to such an extent that in the passion of Christ we find a remedy against all the evils which we incur by our sins. And by our sins we incur five different evils.

The first evil that man incurs by sin is the defilement of his soul. Just as virtue gives the soul its beauty, so sin makes it ugly. “How happened it, O Israel, that you art in your enemies’ land?... You art defiled with the dead” [Baruch 3:10-11]. But all this is taken away by the passion of Christ, whereby Christ poured out His blood as a laver wherein sinners are cleansed: “Who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood” [Rev 1:5]. So, too, the soul is washed by the blood of Christ in baptism because then a new birth is had in virtue of His blood, and hence when one defiles one’s soul by sin, one offers insult to Christ and sins more gravely than before one’s baptism. “A man who has violated the law of Moses dies without any mercy at the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much worse punishment do you think will be deserved by one who treads underfoot the Son of God and esteemes the blood of the testament unclean!” [Heb 10:28-29].

Secondly, we commit an offense against God. A sensual man loves the beauty of the flesh, but God loves spiritual beauty, which is the beauty of the soul. When, however, the soul is defiled by sin, God is offended and the sinner incurs His hatred: “To God the wicked and his wickedness are hateful alike” [Wis 14:9]. This also is removed by the passion of Christ, which made satisfaction to God the Father for sin—a thing which man of himself could never do. The charity and obedience of Christ in His suffering were greater than the sin and disobedience of the first man: “When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son” [Rom 5:10].

Thirdly, we have been weakened by sin. When a person sins the first time, he believes that he will thereafter keep away from sin, but what happens is the very opposite. This is because by that first sin he is weakened and made more prone to commit sins, and sin more and more has power over him. Such a one, as far as he alone is concerned, has lowered himself to such a condition that he cannot rise up, and is like to a man who jumps into

a well from which, without God's help, he would never be rescued. After the fall of man, our nature was weakened and corrupted, and we were made more prone to sin. Christ, however, lessened this sickness and weakness, although He did not entirely take it away. So now man is strengthened by the passion of Christ, and sin is not given such power over him. Moreover, he can rise clean from his sins when aided by God's grace conferred by the Sacraments, which receive their efficacy from the passion of Christ: "Our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin may be destroyed" [Rom 6:6]. Indeed, before the passion of Christ few there were who lived without falling into mortal sin; but afterwards many have lived and are living without mortal sin.

Fourthly, we incur the punishment due to sin. For the justice of God demands that whosoever sins must be punished. This punishment, however, is in proportion to the guilt. But the guilt of mortal sin is infinite, because it is an offense against the infinite good, namely, God, whose commandments the sinner holds in contempt. Therefore, the punishment due to mortal sin is infinite. Christ, however, through His passion has taken away this punishment from us and borne it Himself: "Who Himself bore our sins (that is, the punishment due to sin) in His body upon the tree" [1 Pet 2:24]. The passion of Christ was of such value that it sufficed to expiate for all the sins of the whole world, even of a hundred thousand worlds. And so it is that, when a man is baptized, he is released from all his sins; and so also is it that the priest forgives sins; and, again, the more one conforms himself to the passion of Christ, the greater is the pardon and the grace which he gains.

Fifthly, we incur banishment from the kingdom of heaven. Those who offend kings are compelled to go into exile. Thus, man is expelled from heaven on account of sin. Adam was driven out of paradise immediately after his sin, and the gate of paradise was shut. But Christ by His sufferings and death opened this gate and recalled all the exiles to the kingdom. With the opening of the side of Christ, the gate of paradise is opened; and with the pouring out of His blood, guilt is washed away, satisfaction is made to God, infirmity is removed, punishment is expiated, and the exiles are called back to the kingdom. Hence, the thief received the immediate response: "This day you shall be with Me in paradise" [Lk 23:43]. Never before was this spoken to anyone, not to Adam, not to Abraham, not to David; but this day (i.e., as soon as the gate is opened) the thief, having asked for pardon, received it: "Having a confidence in the entering into the holies by the blood of Christ" [Heb 10:19].

## Consequences

From all this then is seen the effect of the passion of Christ as a remedy for sin. But no less does it profit us as an example. St. Augustine says that the passion of Christ can bring about a complete reformation of our lives.

Whoever wishes to live perfectly need do nothing other than despise what Christ despised on the cross, and desire what Christ desired. There is no virtue that did not have its example on the Cross.

So if you seek an example of charity, then, “greater love than this no one has, than to lay down his life for his friends” [Jn 15:13]. And this Christ did upon the Cross. If, therefore, He gave His life for us, we ought to endure any and all evils for Him: “What shall I render to the Lord for all the things that He has done for me?” [Ps 118:12].

If you seek an example of patience, you will find it in its highest degree upon the Cross. Great patience is exemplified in two ways: either when one suffers intensely in all patience, or when one suffers that which he could avoid if he so wished. Christ suffered greatly upon the Cross: “All you who pass by the way, look and see if there is any sorrow like My sorrow” [Lam 1:12]. And with all patience, because, “when He suffered, He did not threaten” [1 Pet 2:23]. And again: “He shall be led as a sheep to the slaughter and shall be dumb before His shearer, and shall not open His mouth” [Is 53:7]. He could have avoided this suffering, but He did not: “Do you think that I cannot ask My Father, and He will give Me presently more than twelve legions of Angels?” [Mt 26:53]. The patience of Christ upon the cross, therefore, was of the highest degree: “Let us run by patience to the fight proposed to us; looking on Jesus, the author and finisher of faith, who, having joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame” [Heb 12:1-2].

If you seek an example of humility, look upon Him who is crucified; although He was God, He chose to be judged by Pontius Pilate and to be put to death: “Your cause has been judged as that of the wicked” [Job 36:17].

Truly “that of the wicked,” because: “Let us condemn Him to a most shameful death” [Wis 2:20]. The Lord chose to die for His servant; the Life of the Angels suffered death for man: “He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross” [Phil 2:8].

If you seek an example of obedience, imitate Him who was obedient to the Father unto death: “For by the disobedience of one man, many were made sinners; so also by the obedience of one, many shall be made just” [Rom 5:19].

If you seek an example of contempt for earthly things, imitate Him who is the King of kings, the Lord of rulers, in whom are all the treasures of wisdom; but on the Cross He was stripped naked, ridiculed, spat upon, bruised, crowned with thorns, given to drink of vinegar and gall, and finally put to death. How falsely, therefore, is one attached to riches and raiment, for: “They divided My garments amongst them; and upon My robe they cast lots” [Ps 21:19]. How falsely to honors, since “I was covered with lashes and insults;” how falsely to positions of power, because “taking a crown of thorns, they placed it upon My brow;” how falsely to delicacies of the table, for “in My thirst they gave Me to drink of vinegar” [Ps 68:22]. Thus, St. Augustine, in commenting on these words, “Who, having joy set before Him, endured the Cross despising the shame” [Heb 12:2]. says: “The man Christ despised all earthly things in order to teach us to despise them.

#### ARTICLE 5

“He Descended to the Underworld. The third day He arose again from the dead.”

The death of Christ was the separation of His soul from His body as it is with other men. But the Divinity was so indissolubly conjoined to the Man-Christ that although His soul and body were disunited, His Divinity was always most perfectly united to both the soul and body. This we have seen above. Therefore in the Sepulchre His body was together with the Son of God who together with His soul descended to the underworld.

Why descend?

There are four reasons why Christ together with His soul descended to the underworld. First, He wished to take upon Himself the entire punishment for our sin, and thus atone for its entire guilt. The punishment for the sin of man was not alone death of the body, but there was also a punishment of the soul, since the soul had its share in sin; and it was punished by being deprived of the beatific vision; and as yet no atonement had been offered whereby this punishment would be taken away. Therefore, before the coming of Christ all men, even the holy fathers after their death, descended into the underworld. Accordingly in order to take upon Himself most perfectly the punishment due to sinners, Christ not only suffered death, but also His soul descended to the underworld. He, however, descended for a different cause than did the fathers; for they did so out of necessity and were of necessity taken there and detained, but Christ descended there of His own power and free will: “I am counted among them that go down to the pit; I am become as a man without help, free among the dead” [Ps 87:5–Vulgate]. The others were there as captives, but Christ was freely there.

The second reason is that He might perfectly deliver all His friends. Christ had His friends both in the world and in the underworld. The former were His friends in that they possessed charity; and the latter were they who departed this life with charity and faith in the future Redeemer, such as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, and other just and good men. Therefore, since Christ had dwelt among His friends in this world and had delivered them by His death, so He wished to visit His friends who were detained in the underworld and deliver them also: "I will penetrate all the lower parts of the earth, and will behold all that hope in the Lord" [Sir 24:45]. The third reason is that He would completely triumph over the devil. Now, a person is perfectly vanquished when he is not only overcome in conflict, but also when the assault is carried into his very home, and the seat of his kingdom is taken away from him. Thus Christ triumphed over the devil, and on the Cross He completely vanquished him: "Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world (that is, the devil) be cast out" [Jn 12:31]. To make this triumph complete, Christ wished to deprive the devil of the seat of his kingdom and to imprison him in his own house—which is the underworld. Christ, therefore, descended there, and despoiled the devil of everything and bound him, taking away his prey: "And despoiling the principalities and powers, He hath exposed them confidently in open show, triumphing over them in Himself" [Col 2:15]. Likewise, Christ who had received the power and possession of heaven and earth, desired too the possession of the underworld, as says the Apostle: "That in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth" [Phil 2:10]. "In My name they shall cast out devils" [Mk 16:17].

The fourth and final reason is that Christ might free the just who were in the underworld. For as Christ wished to suffer death to deliver the living from death, so also He would descend into the underworld to deliver those who were there: "You also by the blood of your testament, sent forth your prisoners out of the pit where there is no water" [Zech 9:11]. And again: "O death, I will be your death; O hell, I will be your bite" [Hosea 13:14]. Although Christ wholly overcame death, yet not so completely did He destroy the underworld, but, as it were, He bit it. He did not free all from the underworld, but those only who were without mortal sin. He likewise liberated those without original sin, from which they, as individuals, were freed by circumcision; or before [the institution of] circumcision, they who had been saved through their parents' faith (which refers to those who died before having the use of reason); or by the sacrifices, and by their faith in

the future coming of Christ (which refers to adults)". The reason they were there in the underworld is original sin which they had contracted from Adam, and from which as members of the human race they could not be delivered except by Christ. Therefore, Christ left there those who had descended there with mortal sin, and the non-circumcised children. Thus, it is seen that Christ descended into the underworld, and for what reasons. Now we may gather four considerations from this for our own instruction.

#### Considerations

(1) A firm hope in God. No matter how much one is afflicted, one ought always hope in the assistance of God and have trust in Him. There is nothing so serious as to be in the underworld. If, therefore, Christ delivered those who were in the underworld, what great confidence ought every friend of God have that he will be delivered from all his troubles! "She [that is, wisdom] did not forsake the just when he was sold, but delivered him from sinners. She went down with him into the pit. And in bonds she did not leave him" [Wis 10:13]. God helps in a special manner those who serve Him, and hence the servant of God should feel secure in Him: "He who fears the Lord shall tremble at nothing and shall not be afraid; for He is his hope" [Sir 34:16].

(2) We ought to conceive a fear of God and avoid all presumption. We have already seen that Christ suffered for sinners and descended into the underworld for them. However, He did not deliver all sinners, but only those who were free from mortal sin. He left there those who departed this life in mortal sin. Hence, anyone who descends into hell in mortal sin has no hope of deliverance; and he will remain in hell as long as the holy fathers remain in paradise, that is, for all eternity: "And these shall go into everlasting punishment; but the just, into life everlasting" [Mt 25:46].

(3) We ought to arouse in ourselves a mental anxiety. Since Christ descended into the underworld for our salvation, we ought in all care go down there in spirit by considering, for instance, its punishments as did that holy man, Hezekiah: "I said: In the midst of my days I shall go to the gates of the underworld" [Is 38:10]. Indeed, he who during this life frequently descends into hell by thinking of it, will not easily fall into hell at death; for such meditation keeps one from sin, and draws one out of it. We see how men of this world guard themselves against wrongdoing because of the temporal punishment; but with how much more care ought they avoid the punishment of hell which far exceeds all else in its duration, its severity, and its varied nature! "In all your works remember your last end, and you shall never sin" [Sir 7:40].

(4) There comes to us in this an example of love. Christ descended into the underworld in order to deliver His own; and so we should go down there to rescue our own. They cannot help themselves. Therefore, let us deliver those who are in purgatory. He would be very hard-hearted who does not come to the aid of a relative who is detained in an earthly prison; but much more cruel is he who will not assist a friend who is in purgatory, for there is no comparison between the pains of this world and of that: "Have pity on me, have pity on me, at least you my friends, because the hand of the Lord hath touched me" [Job 19:21]. "It is therefore a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from their sins" [2 Mac 12:46]. We may assist these souls in three ways as St. Augustine tells us, viz., through Masses, prayers, and almsgiving. St. Gregory adds a fourth, that is, fasting. All this is not so amazing, for even in this world a friend can pay a debt for his friend; but this applies only to those who are in purgatory. We must necessarily know two things: the glory of God and the punishment of hell. For being attracted by His glory and made fearful by punishments, we take warning and withdraw ourselves from sin. But for us to appreciate these facts is very difficult. Thus, it is said of God's glory: "But the things that are in heaven, who shall search out?" [Wis 9:16]. For those who are worldly minded this is indeed difficult, because "he that is of the earth, of the earth he is, and of the earth he speaks" [Jn 3:31]; but it is easier for the spiritually minded, because, "he who comes from above is above all," as is said in the same place. Accordingly, God descended from heaven and became incarnate to teach us heavenly things. Once it was difficult to know about the punishments of the underworld: "no one has been known to have returned from the underworld" [Wis 2:1], as it is said in the person of the wicked. But this cannot be said now, for just as Christ descended from heaven to teach us heavenly things, so also He came back from the region of the underworld to teach us about it. It is, therefore, necessary that we believe not only that Christ was made man, and died, but also that He arose again from the dead. Therefore, it is said in the Creed: "The third day He arose again from the dead."

#### Uniqueness of Christ's resurrection

We find that many arose from the dead, such as Lazarus [Jn 11:1-44], the son of the widow [Lk 7:11-16], and the daughter of the Ruler of the synagogue [Mk 5:35-43]. But the resurrection of Christ differed from the resurrection of these and of all others in four points.

(1) Christ's resurrection differed from that of all others in its cause. Those others who arose did so not of their own power, but either by the power of

Christ or through the prayers of some Saint. Christ, on the contrary, arose by His own power, because He was not only Man but also God, and the Divinity of the Word was at no time separated either from His soul or from His body. Therefore, His body could, whenever He desired, take again the soul, and His soul the body: "I lay down My life, that I may take it again.... And I have power to lay it down; and I have power to take it up again" [Jn 10:18]. Christ truly died, but not because of weakness or of necessity but rather of His own will entirely and by His own power. This is seen in that moment when He yielded up the Spirit; He cried out with a loud voice [Mt 27:50], which could not be true of others at the moment of dying, because they die out of weakness... For this the centurion said: "Indeed, this was the Son of God" [Mt 27:54]. By that same power whereby He gave up His soul, He received it again; and hence the Creed says, "He arose again," because He was not raised up as if by anyone else. "I have slept and have taken My rest; and I have risen up" [Ps 3:6]. Nor can this be contrary to these words, "This Jesus God raised again" [Acts 2:32], because both the Father and the Son raised Him up, since one and the same power is of the Father and the Son.

(2) Christ's resurrection was different as regards the life to which He arose. Christ arose again to a glorious and incorruptible life: "Christ is risen from the dead by the glory of the Father" [Rom 6:4]. The others, however, were raised to that life which they had before, as seen of Lazarus and the others.

(3) Christ's resurrection was different also in effect and efficacy. In virtue of the resurrection of Christ all shall rise again: "And many bodies of the saints that had slept arose" [Mt 28:52]. The Apostle declares that "Christ is risen from the dead, the first fruits of those who sleep" [1 Cor 15:20]. But also note that Christ by His Passion arrived at glory: "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and so to enter into His glory?" [Lk 24:26]. And this is to teach us how we also may arrive at glory: "Through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God" [Acts 14:21].

(4) Christ's resurrection was different in point of time. Christ arose on the third day; but the resurrection of the others is put off until the end of the world. The reason for this is that the resurrection and death and nativity of Christ were "for our salvation" [Nicene Creed], and thus He wished to rise again at a time when it would be of profit to us. Now, if He had risen immediately, it would not have been believed that He died; and similarly, if He had put it off until much later, the disciples would not have remained in their belief, and there would have been no benefit from His Passion. He



arose again, therefore, on the third day, so that it would be believed that He died, and His disciples would not lose faith in him.

### Instructions

From all this we can take four things for our instruction. Firstly, let us endeavor to arise spiritually, from the death of the soul which we incur by our sins, to that life of justice which is had through penance: "Rise, you who sleep, and arise from the dead; and Christ shall enlighten you" [Eph 5:14]. This is the first resurrection: "Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection" [Rev 20:6].

Secondly, let us not delay to rise until our death, but do it at once, since Christ arose on the third day: "Delay not to be converted to the Lord; and defer it not from day to day" [Sir 5:8]. You will not be able to consider what pertains to salvation when weighed down by illness, and, moreover, by persevering in sin, you will lose part of all the good which is done in the Church, and you will incur many evils. Indeed, the longer you possess the devil, the harder it is to put him away, as St. Bede tells us.

Thirdly, let us rise up again to an incorruptible life in that we may not die again, but resolve to sin no more: "Knowing that Christ, rising again from the dead, dies now no more. Death shall no more have dominion over Him.... So do you also reckon that you are dead to sin, but alive unto God, in Christ Jesus our Lord. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of iniquity unto sin; but present yourselves to God, as those that are alive from the dead" [Rom 6:9,11-14].

Fourthly, let us rise again to a new and glorious life by avoiding all that which formerly were the occasions and the causes of our death and sin: "As Christ is risen from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life" [Rom 6:4]. This new life is the life of justice which renews the soul and leads it to the life of glory.

### ARTICLE 6

"He ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty."

Besides the resurrection of Christ, we must also believe in His ascension; for He ascended into heaven on the fortieth day. Hence, the Creed says: "He ascended into heaven." Concerning this we ought to observe three things, viz., that it was sublime, reasonable, and beneficial.

It was certainly sublime that Christ ascended into heaven. This is expounded in three ways. Firstly, He ascended above the physical heaven: "He... ascended above all the heavens" [Eph 4:10]. Secondly, He ascended above all the spiritual heavens, i.e., spiritual natures: "Raising [Jesus] up

from the dead and setting Him on His right hand in the heavenly places. Above all principality and power and virtue and dominion and every name that is named, not only in this world but also in that which is to come. And He subjected all things under His feet" [Eph 1:20-22]. Thirdly, He ascended up to the very throne of the Father: "Lo, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven. And He came to the Ancient of days" [Dan 7:13]. "And the Lord Jesus, after He had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven and sat at the right hand of God" [Mk 16:19]. Now, it is not to be taken in the literal sense, but figuratively, that Christ is at the right hand of God.

Inasmuch as Christ is God, He is said to sit at the right hand of the Father, that is, in equality with the Father; and as Christ is man, He sits at the right hand of the Father, that is, in a more preferable place. The devil once feigned to do this: "I will ascend above the height of the clouds. I will be like the Most High" [Is 14:13-14]. But Christ alone succeeded in this, and so it is said: "He ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of the Father."

"The Lord said to my Lord: Sit You at My right hand" [Ps 109:1].

The Ascension of Christ into heaven is in accord with reason:

(1) because heaven was due to Christ by His very nature. It is natural for one to return to that place from whence he takes his origin. The beginning of Christ is from God, who is above all things: "I came forth from the Father and am come into the world; again I leave the world and I go to the Father" [Jn 16:28]. "No man ascended into heaven, but He who descended from heaven, the Son of man who is in heaven." [Jn 3:13] The just ascend into heaven, but not in the manner that Christ ascended, i.e., by His own power; for they are taken up by Christ: "Draw me, we will run after You" [Sg 1:3]. Or, indeed, we can say that no man but Christ has ascended into heaven, because the just do not ascend except in so far as they are the members of Christ who is the head of the Church. "Wherever the body shall be, there shall the eagles also be gathered together" [Mt 24:28].

(2) Heaven is due to Christ because of His victory. For He was sent into the world to combat the devil, and He did overcome him. Therefore, Christ deserved to be exalted above all things: "I also have overcome and am set down with My Father in His throne" [Rev 3:21].

(3) The Ascension is reasonable because of the humility of Christ. There never was humility so great as that of Christ, who, although He was God, yet wished to become man; and although He was the Lord, yet wished to take the form of a servant, and, as St. Paul says: "He was made obedient unto death" [Phil 2:8], and descended even into the underworld. For this He deserved to be exalted even to heaven and to the throne of God, for humility

leads to exaltation: "He who humbles himself shall be exalted" [Lk 14:11]. "He who descended is the same also who ascended above all the heavens" [Eph 4:10].

The Ascension of Christ was very beneficial for us. This is seen three ways. Firstly, as our Leader, because He ascended in order to lead us; for we had lost the way, but He has shown it to us. "For He who opens the breach shall go up before them" [Micah 2:13]. and thus we may be made certain of possessing the heavenly kingdom: "I go to prepare a place for you" [Jn 14:2]. Secondly, that He might draw our hearts to Himself: "For where your treasure is, there is your heart so" [Mt 6:21]. Thirdly, to let us withdraw from worldly things: "Therefore, if you be risen with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God. Mind the things that are above, not the things that are upon the earth" [Col 3:1].

#### ARTICLE 7

"From thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead."

It is of the office of the King and Lord to pronounce judgment: "The king who sits on the throne of judgment scatters away all evil with His look" [Prov 20:8]. Since Christ, therefore, ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God as Lord of all, it is clear that His is the office of Judge. For this reason we say in the rule of Catholic faith that "He shall come to judge the living and the dead." Indeed the Angels have said that: "This Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven shall come again as you have seen Him going into heaven" [Acts 1:11].

We shall consider three facts about the judgment: (1) the form of the judgment; (2) the fear of the judgment; (3) our preparation for the judgment. The form of the judgment

Now, concerning the form of the judgment there is a threefold question. Who is the judge, who are to be judged, and upon what will they be judged? Christ is the Judge: "It is He who is appointed by God to be judge of the living and of the dead" [Acts 10:42]. We may here interpret "the dead" to mean sinners and "the living" to mean the just; or "the living" to refer to those who at that time were living and "the dead" to mean those who had died. Christ of a certain is Judge, not only in that He is God, but also in that He is man. The first reason for this is because it is necessary that they who are to be judged may see the Judge. But the Godhead is so wholly delightful that no one could behold it without great enjoyment; and hence the damned are not permitted to see the Judge, nor in consequence to enjoy anything. Christ, therefore, of necessity will appear in the form of man so that He may be seen by all: "And He has given Him power to do judgment, because He

is the Son of man" [Jn 5:27]. Again Christ deserved this office as Man, for as Man He was unjustly judged, and therefore God constitutes Him Judge of the entire world: "Your cause has been judged as that of the wicked. Cause and judgment You shall recover" [Job 36:17]. And, lastly, if God alone should judge men, they, being terrified, would despair; but this despair disappears from men if they are to be judged by a Man: "And then they shall see the Son of man coming in a cloud" [Lk 11:27].

All are to be judged—those who are, who were, and who will be: "We must all be manifested before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the proper things of the body, according as he hath done, whether it be good or evil" [2 Cor 5:10]. There are, says St. Gregory, four different classes of people to be judged. The chief difference is between the good and the wicked.

Of the wicked, some will be condemned but not judged. They are the infidels whose works are not to be discussed because, as St. John says: "He who does not believe is already judged" [Jn 3:18]. Others will be both condemned and judged. They are those possessing the faith who departed this life in mortal sin: "For the wages of sin is death" [Rm 6:23]. They shall not be excluded from the judgment because of the faith which they possessed.

Of the good also, some will be saved and shall not be judged. they are the poor in spirit for God's sake who rather shall judge others: "Amen, I say to you that you, who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit on the seat of His majesty, you also shall sit on twelve seats judging the twelve tribes of Israel" [Mt 19:28]. Now, this is not to be understood only of the disciples, but of all those who are poor in spirit; for otherwise Paul, who labored more than others, would not be among this number. These words, therefore, must refer also to all the followers of the apostles and to all apostolic men: "Know you not that we shall judge Angels? [1 Cor 6:3]. "The Lord will enter into judgment with the ancients of His people and its princes" [Is 3:14].

Others shall both be saved and judged, that is, they who die in a state of righteousness. For although they departed this life in justice, nevertheless they fell somewhat amiss in the business of temporal matters, and hence shall be judged but saved. The judgment will be upon all their deeds good and bad: "Walk in the ways of your heart,... and know that for all these God will bring you into judgment" [Eccles 11:9]. "And all things that are done, God will bring into judgment for every error, whether it be good or evil" [Eccles 12:14]. Even idle words shall be judged: "But I say to you that every

idle word that men shall speak, they shall render an account for it in the day of judgment" [Mt 12:36]. And thoughts also: "For inquisition shall be made into the thought of the ungodly" [Wis 1:9]. Thus, the form of the judgment is clear.

### The fear of the judgment

The judgment ought indeed to be feared. (a) Because of the wisdom of the Judge. God knows all things, our thoughts, words and deeds, and "all things are naked and open to his eyes.[Heb 4:13]. "All the ways of men are open to His eyes" [Prov 16:2]. He knows our words: "The ear of jealousy hears all things" [Wis 1:10]. Also our thoughts: "The heart is perverse above all things and unsearchable. Who can know it? I am the Lord, who search the heart and prove the reins; who give to every one according to his way and according to the fruit of his devices" [Jer 17:9-10]. There will be infallible witnesses— men's own consciences: "Who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness to them; and their thoughts between themselves accusing or also defending one another, in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men" [Rm 2:15-16].

(b) Because of the power of the Judge, who is almighty in Himself: "Behold, the Lord God will come with strength" [Is 40:10]. And also almighty in others: "The whole world shall fight with Him against the unwise" [Wis 5:21]. Hence, Job says: "Whereas there is no man that can deliver out of your hand" [Job 10:7]. "If I ascend into heaven, You are there; if I descend into the underworld, You art present," says the Psalmist.[Ps 138:8].

(c) Because of the inflexible justice of the Judge. The present is the time for mercy; but the future is the time solely for justice; and so the present is our time, but the future is God's time: "When I shall take a time, I shall judge justices" [Ps 74:3 Vulgate]. "The jealousy and rage of the husband will not spare in the day of revenge. Nor will he yield to any man's prayers; nor will he accept for satisfaction ever so many gifts" [Prov 6:34-35].

(d) Because of the anger of the Judge. He shall appear in different ways to the just and to the wicked. To the just, He will be pleasant and gracious: "They will behold the King of beauty" [Is 33:17]. To the wicked He will be angry and pitiless, so that they may say to the mountains: "Fall upon us and hide us from the wrath of the Lamb" [Rev 6:16]. But this anger of God does not bespeak in Him any perturbation of soul, but rather the effect of His anger which is the eternal punishment inflicted upon sinners.

### Our preparation for the judgment

Now, against this fear of the judgment we ought to have four remedies. The first is good works: "Will you then not be afraid of the power? Do what is

good, and you shall have praise from the same” [Rm 13:3]. The second is confession and repentance for sins committed; and this ought to include sorrow in thinking of them, feeling of shame in confessing them, and all severity in making satisfaction for them. And these will take away the eternal punishment. The third is giving of alms, which makes all things clean: “Make friends of the mammon of iniquity; that when you fail, they may receive you into everlasting dwellings” [Lk 16:9]. The fourth is charity, viz., the love of God and our neighbor, for “charity covers a multitude of sins” [1 Pt 4:8].

## ARTICLE 8

“I Believe in the Holy Spirit.”

As we have said, the Word of God is the Son of God just as in a way the word of man is the concept of his intellect. But sometimes man has a word which is dead. This is when, for instance, he conceives what he ought to do, but he has not the will to do it; or when one believes but does not practise; then his faith is said to be dead, as St. James points out [2:17]. The word of God, however, is alive: “For the word of God is living” [Hb 4:12]. It is necessary, therefore, that in God there be will and love. Thus, St. Augustine says: “The word of God which we plan to speak is knowledge with love” [ *De Trinitate* IX, 10]. Now, as the Word of God is the Son of God, God’s love is the Holy Spirit. Hence, it is that one possesses the Holy Spirit when he loves God: “The charity of God is poured forth in our hearts, by the Holy Spirit who is given to us” [Rm 5:5].

There are some who held false opinions concerning the Holy Spirit. They said, for instance, that He was only the servant and minister of God. Hence, to remove these errors the holy Fathers added [in the Nicene Creed] five phrases concerning the Holy Spirit.

“The Holy Spirit, the Lord.”—The first is, that although there are other spirits, such as the Angels who are ministers of God. “Art they not all ministering spirits?” [Hb 1:14], nevertheless the Holy Spirit is the Lord. “God is a Spirit” [Jn 4:24] and, “Now the Lord is a Spirit” [2 Cor 3:17], and also, “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty” [2 Cor 3:11]. The reason is that He makes us love God and cease to love the world. Thus, the Creed says: “In the Holy Spirit, the Lord.”

“And Giver of life.”—The second phrase is there because the soul’s life is to be united to God, inasmuch as God is the life of the soul, and as truly as the soul is the life of the body. Now, the Holy Spirit unites the soul to God through love, because He is the love of God, and therefore He gives life. “It is the spirit who gives life” [Jn 6:64]. Therefore, it is said: “and Giver of life.”

“Who Proceeds from the Father and the Son.”—The third is that the Holy Spirit is one in substance with the Father and the Son; because as the Son is the Word of the Father, so the Holy Spirit is the love both of the Father and the Son, and, therefore, He proceeds from them both. Moreover, just as the Word of God is of the same substance as the Father, so also is Love [Holy Spirit]. of the same substance as the Father and the Son. Hence, it is said: “who proceeds from the Father and the Son.” From this it is seen that the Holy Spirit is not a Creature.

“Who... is Adored and Glorified.”—The fourth phrase is that the Holy Spirit as regards adoration is equal to the Father and the Son: “The true adorers shall adore the Father in spirit and truth” [Jn 4:23]. “Teach all nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” [Mt 28:19]. Hence, it is said: “Who together with the Father and the Son is adored.”

“Who Spoke through the Prophets.”—The fifth phrase, wherein the Holy Spirit is declared equal to God, is that the holy prophets spoke on behalf of God. It is clear that, if the Holy Spirit were not God, then it would not be said that the prophets had spoken of God on His behalf. Thus, says St. Peter: “The holy men of God spoke, inspired by the Holy Spirit” [2 Pt 1:21]. Also: “The Lord God sent me, and His Spirit” [Is 48:16]. And so it is said: “Who spoke through the prophets.”

In all this two errors are condemned. The Manicheans said that the Old Testament was not from God. But this is false because the Holy Spirit spoke through the prophets. Likewise, the error of Priscillian and Montanus was that they believed that the prophets did not speak by the Holy Spirit but were somewhat beside themselves.

### Benefits

Many benefits come to us from the Holy Spirit:

(1) He cleanses us from our sins. The reason is that one must repair that which one has made. Now, the soul is created by the Holy Spirit, because God has made all things through Him; for God, by loving His goodness, created everything: “You love all things that are, and hate none of the things which You made” [Wis 11:25]. Thus, Dionysius says: “Divine love did not permit Him to be without offspring” [ *Div nom.* IV, 20]. It is necessary, therefore, that the hearts of men, destroyed by sin, be made anew by the Holy Spirit: “Send forth your Spirit, and they shall be created; and You shall renew the face of the earth” [Ps 103:30]. Nor is it any wonder that the Spirit cleanses, since all sins are taken away by love: “Many sins are forgiven her,

because she has loved much" [Lk 7:47]. "Charity covers all sins" [Prov 10:12]. And likewise: "Charity covers a multitude of sins" [1 Pt 4:8].

(2) The Holy Spirit enlightens the intellect, since all that we know, we know through the Holy Spirit: "But the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things and bring all things to your mind, whatsoever I shall have said to you" [Jn 14:26]. Also: "His unction teaches you all things" [1 Jn 2:27].

(3) He assists us and, to a certain extent, compels us to keep the commandments. No one can keep the commandments unless he loves God: "If any one love Me, he will keep My word" [Jn 14:23]. Thus, the Holy Spirit makes us love God: "And I give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh and will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit in the midst of you; and I will cause you to walk in My commandments and to keep My judgments and do them" [Ez 36:26-27].

(4) He strengthens in us the hope of eternal life, because He is the pledge to us of this our destiny: "You were signed with the Holy Spirit of promise who is the pledge of our inheritance" [Eph 1:13]. He is, as it were, the surety of our eternal life. The reason is that eternal life is due to man inasmuch as he is become the son of God; and this is brought about in that he is made like unto Christ; and this, in turn, follows from his having the Spirit of Christ, and this is the Holy Spirit: "For you have not received the spirit of bondage again in fear; but you have received the spirit of adoption of sons, whereby we cry: Abba (Father). For the Spirit Himself giveth testimony to our spirit that we are the sons of God" [Rm 8:15-16]. And also: "Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of His Son into your

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