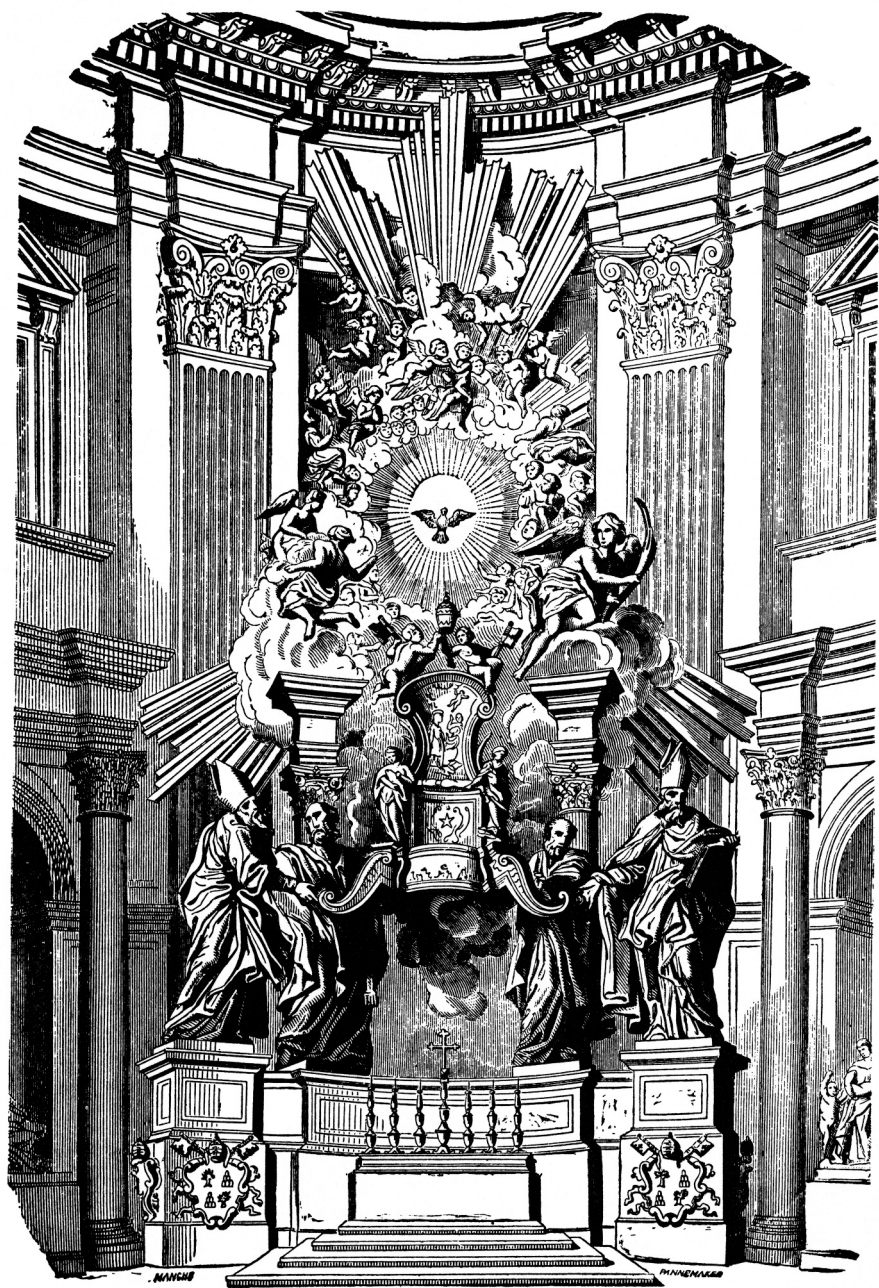


CATECHISM
OF THE
COUNCIL OF TRENT



The chair in which St. Peter sat as Bishop of Rome.

CATECHISM OF THE COUNCIL OF TRENT

FOR PARISH PRIESTS

Issued by order of Pope Pius V

Translated into English with Notes by

John A. McHugh, O.P., S.T.M., Litt. D.

and

Charles J. Callan, O.P., S.T.M., Litt. D.

“All power is given to me in Heaven and earth. Going therefore, teach ye all nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and behold I am with you all days, even to the consumation of the world.”

—Matthew 28:18–20

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Issued by Order of Pope Pius V

Introductory

The Necessity of Religious Instruction

Such is the nature of the human mind and intellect that, although by means of diligent and laborious inquiry it has of itself investigated and discovered many other things pertaining to a knowledge of divine truths; yet guided by its natural lights it never could have known or perceived most of those things by which is attained eternal salvation, the principal end of man's creation and formation to the image and likeness of God.

It is true that *the invisible things of God from the creation of the world are*, as the Apostle teaches, *clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made: his eternal power also, and divinity. (Rom. 1:20)*. But *the mystery which hath been hidden from ages and generations* so far transcends the reach of man's understanding, that were it not made manifest by God to His Saints, to whom He willed to make known by the gift of faith, *the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ (Col. 1:26–27)*, man could by no effort attain to such wisdom.¹

But, as *faith cometh by hearing (Rom. 10:17)*, it is clear how necessary at all times for the attainment of eternal salvation has been the labor and faithful ministry of an authorized teacher; for it is written, *how shall they hear, without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they be sent? (Rom. 10:14–15)*.

And, indeed, never, from the very creation of the world, has God, most merciful and benignant, been wanting to His own; but *at sundry times and in divers manners spoke to the fathers by the prophets (Heb. 1:1)*, and pointed out to them in a manner suited to the

1. On the necessity of revelation see St. Thomas, *Summa Theol.* i. i. 1.

times and circumstances, a sure and direct path to the happiness of Heaven. But, as He had foretold that He would give a teacher of justice *to be the light of the Gentiles, that His salvation might reach even to the ends of the earth* (Is. 49:6), *in these last days he hath spoken to us by his Son* (Heb. 1:2), whom also by a voice from Heaven, *from the excellent glory* (2 Pet. 1:17), He has commanded all to hear and to obey. Furthermore, the Son gave *some to be apostles, and some prophets, and others pastors and teachers*, to announce the word of life; that we might not be *carried about like children tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine* (Eph. 4:11, 14), but holding fast to the firm foundation of the faith, we might be *built together into an habitation of God in the Spirit*. (Eph. 2:22).

Lest any should receive the Word of God from the ministers of the Church, not as the word of Christ, which it really is, but as the word of man, the same Saviour has ordained that their ministry should be invested with so great authority that He says to them: *He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me*. (Luke 10:16). These words He spoke not only of those to whom His words were addressed, but likewise of all who, by legitimate succession, should discharge the ministry of the word, promising to be with them *all days even to the consummation of the world*. (Matt. 28:20).

Need of an Authoritative Catholic Catechism

But while the preaching of the divine Word should never be interrupted in the Church, surely in these, our days, it becomes necessary to labor with more than ordinary zeal and piety to nourish and strengthen the faithful with sound and wholesome doctrine, as with the food of life.² For *false prophets have gone forth into the world*

2. The Protestant Rebellion may be dated from 1520, and the Council of Trent was convened Dec. 13, 1545. Meanwhile the heretics were disseminating their errors far and wide, not only by the

(1 John 4:1), to corrupt the minds of the faithful *with various and strange doctrines* (Heb. 13:9), of whom the Lord has said: *I did not send prophets, yet they ran; I spoke not to them, yet they prophesied.* (Jer. 23:21).

In this work, to such extremes has their impiety, practiced in all the arts of Satan, been carried, that it would seem almost impossible to confine it within any bounds; and did we not rely on the splendid promises of the Saviour, who declared that He had built His Church on so solid a foundation that the *gates of Hell shall not prevail against it* (Matt. 26:18), we should have good reason to fear lest, beset on every side by such a host of enemies and assailed and attacked by so many machinations, it would, in these days, fall to the ground.

For—to say nothing of those illustrious States which heretofore professed, in piety and holiness, the true Catholic Faith transmitted to them by their ancestors, but are now gone astray, wandering from the paths of truth and openly declaring that their best claims to piety are founded on a total abandonment of the Faith of their fathers—there is no region, however remote, no place, however securely guarded, no corner of Christendom, into which this pestilence has not sought secretly to insinuate itself.

For those who intended to corrupt the minds of the faithful, knowing that they could not hold immediate personal intercourse with all, and thus pour into their ears their poisoned doctrines, adopted another plan which enabled them to disseminate error and impiety more easily and extensively. Besides those voluminous works by which they sought the subversion of the Catholic faith—to guard against which (volumes) required perhaps little labor or circumspection, since their contents were clearly heretical—they also com-

spoken word, but also by means of catechisms and pamphlets; e.g., Luther's *Enchiridion* of 1529, and Calvin's *Formulary of Instruction* of 1536. See Introduction.

posed innumerable smaller books, which, veiling their errors under the semblance of piety, deceived with incredible facility the unsuspecting minds of simple folk.

The Nature of this Work

The Fathers, therefore, of the General Council of Trent, anxious to apply some healing remedy to so great and pernicious an evil, were not satisfied with having decided the more important points of Catholic doctrine against the heresies of our times, but deemed it further necessary to issue, for the instruction of the faithful in the very rudiments of faith, a form and method to be followed in all churches by those to whom are lawfully entrusted the duties of pastor and teacher.³

To works of this kind many, it is true, had already given their attention, and earned the reputation of great piety and learning.⁴ But the Fathers deemed it of the first importance that a work should appear, sanctioned by the authority of the Council, from which pastors and all others on whom the duty of imparting instruction devolves, may be able to seek and find reliable matter for the edification of the faithful; that, as there is *one Lord, one faith* (*Eph.* 4:5), there may also be one standard and prescribed form of propounding the dogmas of faith, and instructing Christians in all the duties of piety.⁵

As, therefore, the design of the work embraces a variety of matters, it cannot be supposed that the Council intended that in one volume all the dogmas of Chris-

3. Sess. xxiv. c. 7; Sess. xxv, towards the end.

4. Such as *The Lay Folks Catechism* of Cardinal Thoresby (1357), the *Pupilla Oculi* of John de Burgo (1385), and Gerson's *The A B C of Simple Folk*, and the same author's *Opus Tripartitum*. This latter is regarded as the forerunner of the Catechism of the Council of Trent (cf. *Catholic Encycl.* vol. v. pp. 75 ff.). See Introduction.

5. The proposal of an authoritative Catechism was first made in the Council of Trent in April, 1546, but a committee to direct the work was not appointed before February, 1562. The Catechism was completed and published towards the end of the year 1566. The

tianity should be explained with that minuteness of detail to be found in the works of those who profess to treat the teaching and doctrines of religion in their entirety. Such a task would be one of almost endless labor, and manifestly ill suited to attain the proposed end. But, having undertaken to instruct pastors and such as have care of souls in those things that belong peculiarly to the pastoral office and are accommodated to the capacity of the faithful, the Council intended that such things only should be treated of as might assist the pious zeal of pastors in discharging the duty of instruction, should they not be very familiar with the more abstruse questions of theology.

The Ends of Religious Instruction

Hence, before we proceed to develop in detail the various parts of this summary of doctrine, our purpose requires that we premise a few observations which the pastor should consider and bear in mind in order to know to what end, as it were, all his plans and labors and efforts are to be directed, and how this desired end may be more easily attained.

KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST

The first thing is ever to recollect that all Christian knowledge is reduced to one single head, or rather, to use the words of the Apostle, *this is eternal life: That they may know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.* (John 17:3). A teacher in the Church should, therefore, use his best endeavors

Presidents of the Catechism Commission were Cardinal Seripandi, O.S.A., and St. Charles Borromeo. The composition of the work was entrusted to more than twenty expert theologians, of whom the chief collaborators were Bishop Muzio Calini and the three Dominicans, Leonardo Marini, Egidio Foscarari, and Francesco Foreiro. The classic elegance of style for which the Catechism is also famous was due to the final polishing of the noted Latinists Manutius and Pogiani. Cardinal Sirlet and the Dominicans, Manriquez and Locatelli, were the theological revisers of the Catechism appointed by St. Pius V.

that the faithful earnestly desire *to know Jesus Christ, and him crucified* (1 Cor. 2:2), that they be firmly convinced, and with the most heartfelt piety and devotion believe, that *there is no other name under Heaven given to men, whereby we must be saved* (Acts 4:12), for *he is the propitiation for our sins*. (1 John 2:2).

OBSERVANCE OF THE COMMANDMENTS

But since *by this we know that we have known him, if we keep his commandments* (1 John 2:3), the next consideration, and one intimately connected with the preceding, is to press also upon the attention of the faithful that their lives are not to be wasted in ease and indolence, but that we are *to walk even as he walked* (1 John 2:6), and pursue with all earnestness, *justice, godliness, faith, charity, patience, mildness* (1 Tim. 6:11); for *He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and might cleanse to himself a people acceptable, a pursuer of good works*. (Titus 2:14). These things the Apostle commands pastors *to speak and exhort*.

LOVE OF GOD

But as Our Lord and Saviour has not only declared, but has also proved by His own example, that the Law and the Prophets depend on love (*Matt. 22:40; 1 Tim. 1:5; Rom. 13:10*), and as, according to the Apostle, *charity is the end of the commandment, and the fulfillment of the law* (1 Tim. 1:5; Rom. 13:10), it is unquestionably a chief duty of the pastor to use the utmost diligence to excite the faithful to a love of the infinite goodness of God towards us, that, burning with a sort of divine ardor, they may be powerfully attracted to the supreme and all-perfect good, to adhere to which is true and solid happiness, as is fully experienced by him who can say with the Prophet: *What have I in Heaven? and besides thee what do I desire upon earth?* (Psalm 72:25).

This, assuredly, is that *more excellent way* (1 Cor. 12:31) pointed out by the Apostle when he sums up

all his doctrines and instructions in charity, which *never falleth away*. (1 Cor. 13:8). For whatever is proposed by the pastor, whether it be the exercise of faith, of hope, or of some moral virtue, the love of Our Lord should at the same time be so strongly insisted upon as to show clearly that all the works of perfect Christian virtue can have no other origin, no other end than divine love. (1 Cor. 16:14).

The Means Required for Religious Instruction

But as in imparting instruction of any sort the manner of communicating it is of highest importance, so in conveying religious instruction to the people, the method should be deemed of the greatest moment.

INSTRUCTION SHOULD BE ACCOMMODATED TO THE CAPACITY OF THE HEARER

Age, capacity, manners and condition must be borne in mind, so that he who instructs may become *all things to all men*, in order that he may be able to gain all to Christ (1 Cor. 9:22), prove himself a dutiful minister and steward (1 Cor. 4:1-2), and, like a good and faithful servant, be found worthy to be placed by his Lord *over many things*. (Matt. 25:23). The priest must not imagine that those committed to his care are all on the same level, so that he can follow one fixed and unvarying method of instruction to lead all in the same way to knowledge and true piety; for some are *as new-born infants* (1 Peter 2:2), others are growing up in Christ, while a few are, so to say, of full maturity. Hence the necessity of considering who they are that have occasion for milk, who for more solid food (1 Cor. 3:2; Heb. 5:12), and of affording to each such nourishment of doctrine as may give spiritual increase, *until we all meet in the unity of faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the age of the fulness of Christ*. (Eph. 4:13). This the Apostle inculcates for

all by his own example when he says that he is a *debtor to the Greeks and to the Barbarians, to the wise and to the unwise* (Rom. 1:14), thus giving all who are called to this ministry to understand that in announcing the mysteries of faith and the precepts of life, the instruction is to be so accommodated to the capacity and intelligence of the hearers, that, while the minds of the strong are filled with spiritual food, the little ones be not suffered to perish with hunger, asking for bread, while there is *none to break it unto them*. (Lamen. 4:4).

ZEAL

Nor should our zeal in communicating Christian knowledge be relaxed because it has sometimes to be exercised in expounding matters apparently humble and unimportant, and whose exposition is usually irksome, especially to minds accustomed to the contemplation of the more sublime truths of religion. If the Wisdom of the eternal Father descended upon the earth in the meanness of our flesh to teach us the maxims of a heavenly life, who is there whom *the love of Christ* does not constrain (2 Cor. 5:14) to become little in the midst of his brethren, and, as a nurse fostering her children, so anxiously to wish for the salvation of his neighbors as to be ready, as the Apostle says of himself, to give them not only the gospel of God, but even his own life. (1 Thess. 2:7-8).

STUDY OF THE WORD OF GOD

Now all the doctrines in which the faithful are to be instructed are contained in the Word of God, which is found in Scripture and tradition. To the study of these, therefore, the pastor should devote his days and his nights, keeping in mind the admonition of St. Paul to Timothy, which all who have the care of souls should consider as addressed to themselves: *Attend to reading, to exhortation, and to doctrine* (1 Tim. 4:13), for *all scripture divinely inspired is profitable to teach, to*

*reprove, to correct, to instruct in justice, that the man of God may be perfect, furnished to every good work. (2 Tim. 3:16–17).*⁶

Division of this Catechism

The truths revealed by Almighty God are so many and so various that it is no easy task to acquire a knowledge of them, or, having done so, to remember them so well as to be able to explain them with ease and readiness when occasion requires. Hence our predecessors in the faith have very wisely reduced all the doctrines of salvation to these four heads: The Apostles' Creed, the Sacraments, the Ten Commandments, and the Lord's Prayer.

The part on the Creed contains all that is to be held according to Christian faith, whether it regard the knowledge of God, the creation and government of the world, or the redemption of man, the rewards of the good and the punishments of the wicked. The part devoted to the Seven Sacraments teaches us what are the signs, and, as it were, the instruments of grace. In the part on the Decalogue is described whatever has reference to the law, *whose end is charity.* (1 Tim. 1:5). Finally, the Lord's Prayer contains whatever can be the object of the Christian's desires, or hopes, or prayers. The exposition, therefore, of these four parts, which are, as it were, the general heads of Sacred Scripture, includes almost everything that a Christian should learn.

How This Work Is to Be Used

We therefore deem it proper to inform pastors that, whenever they have occasion, in the ordinary discharge of their duty, to expound any passage of the Gospel or any other part of Holy Scripture. they will find its subject-matter treated under some one of the four heads

6. On the qualities of the preacher of the Word of God see *Summa Theol.* 1a. 2ae. cxi. 4; 2a. 2ae. clxxvii. 1; *Encyc. Acerbo nimis* of Pius X, April 15, 1905; *Encyc. Humani generis* of Benedict XV, June 15, 1917.

already enumerated, to which they will recur, as to the source from which their instruction is to be drawn.

Thus, if the Gospel of the first Sunday of Advent is to be explained, *There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon*, etc. (Luke 21:25), whatever regards its explanation is contained under the Article of the Creed, *He shall come to judge the living and the dead*; and by embodying the substance of that Article in his exposition, the pastor will at once instruct his people in the Creed and in the Gospel. Whenever, therefore, he has to communicate instruction and expound the Scriptures, he will observe the same rule of referring all to these four principal heads under which, as we observed, the whole teaching and doctrine of Holy Scripture is contained. As for order, however, he is free to follow that which he deems best suited to the circumstances of persons and time.

PART I

The Creed

Faith

In preparing and instructing men in the teachings of Christ the Lord, the Fathers began by explaining the meaning of faith. Following their example, we have thought it well to treat first what pertains to that virtue.

Though the word *faith* has a variety of meanings in the Sacred Scriptures,¹ we here speak only of that faith by which we yield our entire assent to whatever has been divinely revealed.

NECESSITY OF FAITH

That faith thus understood is necessary to salvation no man can reasonably doubt, particularly since it is written: *Without faith it is impossible to please God.* (Heb. 11:6). For as the end proposed to man as his ultimate happiness is far above the reach of human understanding, it was therefore necessary that it should be made known to him by God. This knowledge, however, is nothing else than faith, by which we yield our unhesitating assent to whatever the authority of our Holy Mother the Church teaches us to have been revealed by God; for the faithful cannot doubt those things of which God, who is truth itself, is the author. Hence we see the great difference that exists between this faith which we give to God and that which we yield to the writers of human history.²

1. On the meaning of the word "faith" see *Catholic Encycl.*, vol. v. p. 752.

2. On the necessity of faith see *Summa Theol.* 2a. 2ae. ii. 3, 4.

UNITY OF FAITH

Faith differs in degree; for we read in Scripture these words: *O thou of little faith, why didst thou doubt* (Matt. 14:31); and *Great is thy faith* (Matt. 15:28); and *Increase our faith*. (Luke 17:5). It also differs in dignity, for we read: *Faith without works is dead* (James 2:17, 20); and, *Faith that worketh by charity*. (Gal. 5:6). But although faith is so comprehensive, it is yet the same in kind, and the full force of its definition applies equally to all its varieties. How fruitful it is and how great are the advantages we may derive from it we shall point out when explaining the Articles of the Creed.³

The Creed

Now the chief truths which Christians ought to hold are those which the holy Apostles, the leaders and teachers of the faith, inspired by the Holy Ghost, have divided into the twelve Articles of the Creed.⁴ For having received a command from the Lord to go forth *into the whole world*, as His ambassadors, and *preach the Gospel to every creature* (2 Cor. 5:18–20; Mark 16:15), they thought it advisable to draw up a formula of Christian faith, that all might think and *speak the same thing*, and that among those whom they should have called to the unity of the faith no schisms would exist, but that they should be *perfect in the same mind, and in the same judgment*. (1 Cor. 1:10).⁵

This profession of Christian faith and hope, drawn up by themselves, the Apostles called a *symbol*; either because it was made up of various parts, each of which was contributed by an Apostle, or because by it, as by a common sign and watchword, they might easily dis-

3. On the kinds and degrees of faith see *Summa Theol.* 2a. 2ae. iv. 4; v. 4.

4. On the Creed see *Summa Theol.* 2a. 2ae. i. 6-10.

5. On the Creeds see *Catholic Encycl.*, vol. iv. p. 478; vol. i. pp. 629 ff.

tinguish deserters from the faith and false brethren *unawares brought in* (Gal. 2:4), *adulterating the word of God* (2 Cor. 2:17; 4:2), from those who had truly bound themselves by oath to serve under the banner of Christ.⁶

DIVISION OF THE CREED

Christianity proposes to the faithful many truths which, either separately or in general, must be held with an assured and firm faith. Among these what must first and necessarily be believed by all is that which God Himself has taught us as the foundation and summary of truth concerning the unity of the Divine Essence, the distinction of Three Persons, and the actions which are peculiarly attributed to each. The pastor should teach that the Apostles' Creed briefly comprehends the doctrine of this mystery.

For, as has been observed by our predecessors in the faith, who have treated this subject with great piety and accuracy, the Creed seems to be divided into three principal parts: one describing the First Person of the Divine Nature, and the stupendous work of the creation; another, the Second Person, and the mystery of man's redemption; a third, the Third Person, the head and source of our sanctification; the whole being expressed in various and most appropriate propositions. These propositions are called Articles, from a comparison frequently used by the Fathers; for as the members of the body are divided by joints (*articuli*), so in this profession of faith, whatever is to be believed distinctly and separately from anything else is rightly and suitably called an Article.⁷

6. The term "symbol" is from the Greek *σύμβολον*, "sign," because the Creed is a distinctive mark of believers; or from the Greek *σύμβολή*, "a collection," because the Creed comprises the principal Articles of faith.

7. For an explanation of the twelve Articles of the Creed see St. Thomas' *Expositio in Symbolum*.

ARTICLE I

“I Believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of Heaven and Earth”

MEANING OF THIS ARTICLE

The meaning of the above words is this: I believe with certainty, and without a shadow of doubt profess my belief in God the Father, the First Person of the Trinity, who by His omnipotence created from nothing and preserves and governs the heavens and the earth and all things which they contain; and not only do I believe in Him from my heart and profess this belief with my lips, but with the greatest ardor and piety I tend towards Him, as the supreme and most perfect good.

Let this serve as a brief summary of this first Article. But since great mysteries lie concealed under almost every word, the pastor must now give them a more careful consideration, in order that, as far as God has permitted, the faithful may approach, with fear and trembling, to contemplate the glory of His Majesty.

“I Believe”

The word *believe* does not here mean *to think, to suppose, to be of opinion*; but, as the Sacred Scriptures teach, it expresses the deepest conviction, by which the mind gives a firm and unhesitating assent to God revealing His mysterious truths. As far, therefore, as regards the use of the word here, he who firmly and without hesitation is convinced of anything is said to believe.

FAITH EXCLUDES DOUBT

The knowledge derived through faith must not be considered less certain because its objects are not seen; for the divine light by which we know them, although it does not render them evident, yet suffers us not to doubt

them. *For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath himself shone in our hearts (2 Cor. 4:6), that the gospel be not hidden to us, as to those that perish. (2 Cor. 4:3).*

FAITH EXCLUDES CURIOSITY

From what has been said it follows that he who is gifted with this heavenly knowledge of faith is free from an inquisitive curiosity. For when God commands us to believe He does not propose to us to search into His divine judgments, or inquire into their reason and cause, but demands an unchangeable faith, by which the mind rests content in the knowledge of eternal truth. And indeed, since we have the testimony of the Apostle that *God is true; and every man a liar (Rom. 3:4)*, and since it would argue arrogance and presumption to disbelieve the word of a grave and sensible man affirming anything as true, and to demand that he prove his statements by arguments or witnesses, how rash and foolish are those, who, hearing the words of God Himself, demand reasons for His heavenly and saving doctrines? Faith, therefore, must exclude not only all doubt, but all desire for demonstration.

FAITH REQUIRES OPEN PROFESSION

The pastor should also teach that he who says, *I believe*, besides declaring the inward assent of the mind, which is an internal act of faith, should also openly profess and with alacrity acknowledge and proclaim what he inwardly and in his heart believes. For the faithful should be animated by the same spirit that spoke by the lips of the Prophet when he said: *I believe, and therefore did I speak (Ps. 115:10)*, and should follow the example of the Apostles who replied to the princes of the people: *We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard. (Acts 4:20)*. They should be encouraged by these noble words of St. Paul: *I am not ashamed of the gospel. For it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth (Rom. 1:16)*;

and likewise by those other words; in which the truth of this doctrine is expressly confirmed: *With the heart we believe unto justice; but with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.* (Rom. 10:10).¹

“In God”

From these words we may learn how exalted are the dignity and excellence of Christian wisdom, and what a debt of gratitude we owe to the divine goodness. For to us it is given at once to mount as by the steps of faith to the knowledge of what is most sublime and desirable.

KNOWLEDGE OF GOD MORE EASILY OBTAINED THROUGH FAITH THAN THROUGH REASON

There is a great difference between Christian philosophy and human wisdom. The latter, guided solely by the light of nature, advances slowly by reasoning on sensible objects and effects, and only after long and laborious investigation is it able at length to contemplate with difficulty the invisible things of God, to discover and understand a First Cause and Author of all things. Christian philosophy, on the contrary, so quickens the human mind that without difficulty it pierces the heavens, and, illumined with divine light, contemplates first, the eternal source of light, and in its radiance all created things; so that we experience with the utmost pleasure of mind that we have been called, as the Prince of the Apostles says, *out of darkness into his admirable light*, and *believing we rejoice with joy unspeakable.* (1 Pet. 1:8; 1 Pet. 2:9).

Justly, therefore, do the faithful profess first to believe in God, whose majesty, with the Prophet Jeremias, we declare *incomprehensible.* (Jer. 32:19). For, as the Apostle says, *He dwells in light inaccessible, which no man hath seen, nor can see* (1 Tim. 6:16); as God Himself, speaking to Moses, said: *No man shall see my face and*

1. For an explanation of the act and habit of faith see *Summa Theol.* 2a. 2ae. ii. iii. iv.

live. (Exod. 33:20). The mind cannot rise to the contemplation of the Deity, whom nothing approaches in sublimity, unless it be entirely disengaged from the senses, and of this in the present life we are naturally incapable.²

KNOWLEDGE OF GOD OBTAINED THROUGH
FAITH IS CLEARER

But while this is so, yet God, as the Apostle says, *left not himself without testimony, doing good from Heaven, giving rains and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness. (Acts 14:16).* Hence it is that the philosophers conceived no mean idea of the Divinity, ascribed to Him nothing corporeal, gross or composite. They considered Him the perfection and fullness of all good, from whom, as from an eternal, inexhaustible fountain of goodness and benignity, flows every perfect gift to all creatures. They called Him the wise, the author and lover of truth, the just, the most beneficent, and gave Him also many other appellations expressive of supreme and absolute perfection. They recognized that His immense and infinite power fills every place and extends to all things.³

These truths the Sacred Scriptures express far better and much more clearly, as in the following passages: *God is a spirit (John 4:24); Be ye perfect, even as also your heavenly Father is perfect (Matt. 5:48); All things are naked and open to his eyes (Heb. 4:13); O the depth*

2. On this question see *Summa Theol.* Ia. xii. II.

3. Xenophanes (c. 570 B.C.) describes the Deity as "sacred and unutterable mind, flashing through the whole world with rapid thoughts"; he teaches the unity, eternity, unchangeableness, sublimity and spirituality of God, and that God is all eye, all ear, all intellect. Empedocles (c. 490 B.C.) also describes God as mind. Anaxagoras (c. 500-430 B.C.) teaches that the moving power which formed the world is Mind, and that this Mind is distinguished from other things because It alone is simple and unmixed, has knowledge about everything, the future as well as the past, is self-ruled and has supreme power over all things. Socrates (469-399 B.C.) held that the order of the world proves the intervention of a supreme intelligence, that God is eternal and immense, and that He governs the world; that man may enter into communion with Him, and should invoke and honor Him.

of the riches of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God! (Rom. 11:33). God is true (Rom. 3:4); I am the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6); Thy right hand is full of justice (Ps. 47:11); Thou openest thy hand, and fillest with blessing every living creature (Ps. 144:16); and finally: Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy face? If I ascend into Heaven, thou art there; if I descend into hell, thou art there. If I take my wings early in the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, etc. (Ps. 138:7–9), and Do I not fill Heaven and earth, saith the Lord? (Jer. 23:24).

KNOWLEDGE OF GOD OBTAINED THROUGH FAITH IS MORE CERTAIN

These great and sublime truths regarding the nature of God, which are in full accord with Scripture, the philosophers were able to learn from an investigation of God's works. But even here we see the necessity of divine revelation if we reflect that not only does faith, as we have already observed, make known clearly and at once to the rude and unlettered, those truths which only the learned could discover, and that by long study; but also that the knowledge obtained through faith is much more certain and more secure against error than if it were the result of philosophical inquiry.

KNOWLEDGE OF GOD OBTAINED THROUGH FAITH IS MORE AMPLE AND EXALTED

But how much more exalted must not that knowledge of the Deity be considered, which cannot be

Plato (c. 427–347) freely criticized the anthropomorphic notions of God that prevailed in his day. The Divinity, he taught, is supremely perfect, the absolute Good, the Idea of goodness, who exercises over all things a providence which orders and governs everything for the best. He extols God's wisdom and truthfulness, says He has a care for the small as well as the great, and that He wishes all to invoke Him. Aristotle (384–322) teaches that God is pure actuality, one, incorporeal and indivisible, the intelligence of intelligence; that the divine life consists in contemplative thought; that God is eternal and unchangeable in Himself, the first cause and last end of all things.

acquired in common by all from the contemplation of nature, but is peculiar to those who are illumined by the light of faith?

This knowledge is contained in the Articles of the Creed, which disclose to us the unity of the Divine Essence and the distinction of Three Persons, and show also that God Himself is the ultimate end of our being, from whom we are to expect the enjoyment of the eternal happiness of Heaven, according to the words of St. Paul: *God is a rewarder of them that seek Him. (Heb. 11:6)*. How great are these rewards, and whether they are such that human knowledge could aspire to their attainment, we learn from these words of Isaias uttered long before those of the Apostle: *From the beginning of the world they have not heard, nor perceived with the ears: the eye hath not seen besides thee, O God, what things thou hast prepared for them that wait for thee. (Is. 64:4)*.⁴

THE UNITY OF NATURE IN GOD

From what is said it must also be confessed that there is but one God, not many gods. For we attribute to God supreme goodness and infinite perfection, and it is impossible that what is supreme and most perfect could be common to many. If a being lack anything that constitutes supreme perfection, it is therefore imperfect and cannot have the nature of God.

The unity of God is also proved from many passages of Sacred Scripture. It is written: *Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord (Deut. 6:4)*; again the Lord commands: *Thou shalt not have strange gods before me (Exod. 20:3)*; and further He often admonishes us by the Prophet: *I am the first, and I am the last, and besides me there is no God. (Is. 48:12; 44:6)*. The Apostle also openly declares: *One Lord, one faith, one baptism. (Eph. 4:5)*.

It should not, however, excite our surprise if the Sacred Scriptures sometimes give the name of God to

4. For a comparison of faith and reason see *Summa Theol.* 1a. xii. 13.

creatures. For when they call the Prophets and judges gods, they do not speak according to the manner of the Gentiles, who, in their folly and impiety, formed to themselves many gods; but express, by a manner of speaking then in use, some eminent quality or function conferred on such persons by the gift of God.⁵

THE TRINITY OF PERSONS IN GOD

The Christian faith, therefore, believes and professes, as is declared in the Nicene Creed in confirmation of this truth, that God in His Nature, Substance and Essence is one. But soaring still higher, it so understands Him to be one that it adores unity in trinity and trinity in unity. Of this mystery we now proceed to speak, as it comes next in order in the Creed.⁶

“The Father”

As God is called *Father* for more reasons than one, we must first determine the more appropriate sense in which the word is used in the present instance.

GOD IS CALLED “FATHER” BECAUSE HE IS CREATOR AND RULER

Even some on whose darkness the light of faith never shone conceived God to be an eternal substance from whom all things have their beginning, and by whose Providence they are governed and preserved in their order and state of existence. Since, therefore, he to whom a family owes its origin and by whose wisdom and authority it is governed is called *father*, so by an analogy derived from human things these persons gave the name *Father* to God, whom they acknowledge to be the Creator and Governor of the universe. The Sacred Scriptures also, when they wish to show that to God must be ascribed the creation of all things, supreme power and admirable Providence, make use

5. On the unity of God see *Summa Theol.* 1a. xi.

6. On the plurality of Persons in God see *Summa Theol.* 1a. xxx.

of the same name. Thus we read: *Is not he thy Father, that hath possessed thee, and made thee and created thee?* (Deut. 32:6). And: *Have we not all one Father? hath not one God created us?* (Mal. 2:10).⁷

GOD IS CALLED "FATHER" BECAUSE
HE ADOPTS CHRISTIANS THROUGH GRACE

But God, particularly in the New Testament, is much more frequently, and in some sense peculiarly, called the Father of Christians, who *have not received the spirit of bondage again in fear; but have received the spirit of adoption of sons* (of God), *whereby they cry: Abba* (Father). (Rom. 8:15). *For the Father hath bestowed upon us that manner of charity that we should be called, and be the sons of God* (1 John 3:1), *and if sons, heirs also; heirs indeed of God, and joint-heirs with Christ* (Rom. 8:17), *who is the first-born amongst many brethren* (Rom. 8:29), *and is not ashamed to call us brethren.* (Heb. 2:11). Whether, therefore, we look to the common title of creation and Providence, or to the special one of spiritual adoption, rightly do the faithful profess their belief that God is their Father.⁸

THE NAME "FATHER" ALSO DISCLOSES THE
PLURALITY OF PERSONS IN GOD

But the pastor should teach that on hearing the word *Father*, besides the ideas already unfolded, the mind should rise to more exalted mysteries. Under the name *Father*, the divine oracles begin to unveil to us a mysterious truth which is more abstruse and more deeply hidden in that inaccessible light in which God dwells, and which human reason and understanding could not attain to, nor even conjecture to exist.

This name implies that in the one Essence of the Godhead is proposed to our belief, not only one Per-

7. More will be said on this subject in the explanation of the opening words of the Lord's Prayer.

8. On the meaning of the word "Father" see *Summa Theol.* 1a. xxxiii. 2, 3.

son, but a distinction of persons; for in one Divine Nature there are Three Persons—the Father, begotten of none; the Son, begotten of the Father before all ages; the Holy Ghost, proceeding from the Father and the Son, likewise, from all eternity.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY

In the one Substance of the Divinity the Father is the First Person, who with His Only-begotten Son, and the Holy Ghost, is one God and one Lord, not in the singularity of one Person, but in the trinity of one Substance.⁹ These Three Persons, since it would be impiety to assert that they are unlike or unequal in any thing, are understood to be distinct only in their respective properties. For the Father is unbegotten, the Son begotten of the Father, and the Holy Ghost proceeds from both. Thus we acknowledge the Essence and the Substance of the Three Persons to be the same in such wise that we believe that in confessing the true and eternal God we are piously and religiously to adore distinction in the Persons, unity in the Essence, and equality in the Trinity.

Hence, when we say that the Father is the First Person, we are not to be understood to mean that in the Trinity there is anything first or last, greater or less. Let none of the faithful be guilty of such impiety, for the Christian religion proclaims the same eternity, the same majesty of glory in the Three Persons. But since the Father is the Beginning without a beginning, we truly and unhesitatingly affirm that He is the First Person, and as He is distinct from the Others by His peculiar relation of paternity, so of Him alone is it true that He begot the Son from eternity. For when in the Creed we pronounce together the words *God* and *Father*, it means that He was always both God and Father.¹⁰

9. See Preface for the Mass of the Holy Trinity,

10. On the equality of the Persons of the Trinity see *Summa Theol.* 1a. xlii.

PRACTICAL ADMONITIONS CONCERNING THE
MYSTERY OF THE TRINITY

Since nowhere is a too curious inquiry more dangerous, or error more fatal,¹¹ than in the knowledge and exposition of this, the most profound and difficult of mysteries, let the pastor teach that the terms *nature* and *person* used to express this mystery should be most scrupulously retained; and let the faithful know that unity belongs to essence, and distinction to persons.

But these are truths which should not be made the subject of too subtle investigation, when we recollect that *he who is a searcher of majesty shall be overwhelmed by glory*. (*Prov.* 25:27). We should be satisfied with the assurance and certitude which faith gives us that we have been taught these truths by God Himself, to doubt whose word is the extreme of folly and misery. He has said: *Teach ye all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost* (*Matt.* 28:19); and again, *there are three who give testimony in Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one*. (*1 John* 5:7).¹²

Let him, however, who by the divine bounty believes these truths, constantly beseech and implore God and the Father, who made all things out of nothing, and *ordereth all things sweetly* (*Wis.* 8:1), who *gave us power to become the sons of God* (*John* 1:12), and who made known to the human mind the mystery of the Trinity—let him, I say, pray unceasingly that, admitted one day into the eternal tabernacles (*Luke* 16:9), he may be worthy to see how great is the fecundity of the Father, who contemplating and understanding Himself, begot the Son like and equal to Himself, how a love of charity in both, entirely the same and equal, which is the Holy Ghost, proceeding from the Father and the Son, connects the begetter and the begotten

11. St. Augustine, *De Trinit.* i. c. 3.

12. On the impossibility of knowing or proving the Trinity from reason see *Summa Theol.* 1a. xxxii. 1. On the necessity of faith in the Trinity see *Summa Theol.* 2a. 2ae. ii. 8.

by an eternal and indissoluble bond; and that thus the Essence of the Trinity is one and the distinction of the Three Persons perfect.

“Almighty”

The Sacred Scriptures, in order to mark the piety and devotion with which the most holy name of God is to be adored, usually express His supreme power and infinite majesty in a variety of ways; but the pastor should, first of all, teach that almighty power is most frequently attributed to Him. Thus He says of Himself: *I am the almighty Lord* (Gen. 17:1); and again, Jacob when sending his sons to Joseph thus prayed for them: *May my almighty God make him favorable to you.* (Gen. 43:14). In the Apocalypse also it is written: *The Lord God, who is, and who was, and who is to come, the almighty* (Apoc. 1:8); and in another place the last day is called the *great day of the almighty God.* (Apoc. 16:14). Sometimes the same attribute is expressed in many words; thus: *No word shall be impossible with God* (Luke 1:37); *Is the hand of the Lord unable?* (Num. 11:23). *Thy power is at hand when thou wilt* (Wis. 12:18), and so on.

MEANING OF THE TERM “ALMIGHTY”

From these various modes of expression it is clearly perceived what is comprehended under this single word *almighty*. By it we understand that there neither exists nor can be conceived in thought or imagination anything which God cannot do. For not only can He annihilate all created things, and in a moment summon from nothing into existence many other worlds, an exercise of power which, however great, comes in some degree within our comprehension; but He can do many things still greater, of which the human mind can form no conception.

But though God can do all things, yet He cannot lie, or deceive, or be deceived; He cannot sin, or cease to exist, or be ignorant of anything. These defects are

compatible with those beings only whose actions are imperfect; but God, whose acts are always most perfect, is said to be incapable of such things, simply because the capability of doing them implies weakness, not the supreme and infinite power over all things which God possesses. Thus we so believe God to be omnipotent that we exclude from Him entirely all that is not intimately connected and consistent with the perfection of His nature.

WHY OMNIPOTENCE ALONE
IS MENTIONED IN THE CREED

The pastor should point out the propriety and wisdom of having omitted all other names of God in the Creed, and of having proposed to us only that of *almighty* as the object of our belief. For by acknowledging God to be omnipotent, we also of necessity acknowledge Him to be omniscient, and to hold all things in subjection to His supreme authority and dominion. When we do not doubt that He is omnipotent, we must be also convinced of everything else regarding Him, the absence of which would render His omnipotence altogether unintelligible.

Besides, nothing tends more to confirm our faith and animate our hope than a deep conviction that all things are possible to God; for whatever may be afterwards proposed as an object of faith, however great, however wonderful, however raised above the natural order, is easily and without hesitation believed, once the mind has grasped the knowledge of the omnipotence of God. Nay more, the greater the truths which the divine oracles announce, the more willingly does the mind deem them worthy of belief. And should we expect any favor from Heaven, we are not discouraged by the greatness of the desired benefit, but are cheered and confirmed by frequently considering that there is nothing which an omnipotent God cannot effect.

ADVANTAGES OF FAITH IN GOD'S OMNIPOTENCE

With this faith, then, we should be specially fortified whenever we are required to render any extraordinary service to our neighbor or seek to obtain by prayer any favor from God. Its necessity in the one case we learn from the Lord Himself, who, when rebuking the incredulity of the Apostles, said: *If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you shall say to this mountain: Remove from hence thither, and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible to you* (Matt. 17:19); and in the other case, from these words of St. James: *Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, which is moved and carried about by the wind. Therefore let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.* (James 1:6-7).

This faith brings with it also many advantages and helps. It forms us, in the first place, to all humility and lowliness of mind, according to these words of the Prince of the Apostles: *Be you humbled therefore under the mighty hand of God.* (1 Pet. 5:6). It also teaches us not to fear where there is no cause of fear, but to fear God alone, in whose power we ourselves and all that we have are placed; for our Saviour says: *I will shew you whom you shall fear; fear ye him, who after he hath killed, hath power to cast into Hell.* (Luke 12:5). This faith is also useful to enable us to know and exalt the infinite mercies of God towards us. For he who reflects on the omnipotence of God, cannot be so ungrateful as not frequently to exclaim: *He that is mighty, hath done great things to me.* (Luke 1:49).

NOT THREE ALMIGHTIES BUT ONE ALMIGHTY

When, however, in this Article we call the Father *almighty*, let no one be led into the error of thinking that this attribute is so ascribed to Him as not to belong also to the Son and the Holy Ghost. As we say the Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Ghost is God, and yet there are not three Gods but one God;

so in like manner we confess that the Father is almighty, the Son almighty, and the Holy Ghost almighty, and yet *there are not three almighties but one almighty*.¹³

The Father, in particular, we call almighty, because He is the Source of all being; as we also attribute wisdom to the Son, because He is the eternal Word of the Father; and goodness to the Holy Ghost, because He is the love of both. These, however, and similar appellations, may be given indiscriminately to the Three Persons, according to the teaching of Catholic faith.¹⁴

"Creator"

The necessity of having previously imparted to the faithful a knowledge of the omnipotence of God will appear from what we are now about to explain with regard to the creation of the world. The wondrous production of so stupendous a work is more easily believed when all doubt concerning the immense power of the Creator has been removed.

For God formed the world not from materials of any sort, but created it from nothing, and that not by constraint or necessity, but spontaneously, and of His own free will. Nor was He impelled to create by any other cause than a desire to communicate His goodness to creatures. Being essentially happy in Himself, He stands not in need of anything; as David expresses it: *I have said to the Lord, thou art my God, for thou hast no need of my goods.* (Ps. 15:2).¹⁵

As it was His own goodness that influenced Him when He did all things whatsoever He would, so in the work of creation He followed no external form or model; but contemplating, and as it were imitating, the universal model contained in the divine intelligence, the supreme Architect, with infinite wisdom and

13. Athanasian Creed.

14. On God's omnipotence see *Summa Theol.* 1a. xxv.

15. On the production of the world from nothing and on the motive of creation see *Summa Theol.* 1a. xlv. 2, 4.

power—attributes peculiar to the Divinity—created all things in the beginning. *He spoke and they were made: he commanded and they were created.* (Ps. 32:9).¹⁶

“Of Heaven and Earth”

The words *heaven* and *earth* include all things which the heavens and the earth contain; for besides the heavens, which the Prophet has called *the works of his fingers* (Ps. 8:4), He also gave to the sun its brilliancy, and to the moon and stars their beauty; and that they might be *for signs, and for seasons, and for days and years.* (Gen. 1:14). He so ordered the celestial bodies in a certain and uniform course, that nothing varies more than their continual revolution, while nothing is more fixed than their variety.¹⁷

CREATION OF THE WORLD OF SPIRITS

Moreover, He created out of nothing the spiritual world and Angels innumerable to serve and minister to Him; and these He enriched and adorned with the admirable gifts of His grace and power.

That the devil and the other rebel angels were gifted from the beginning of their creation with grace, clearly follows from these words of the Sacred Scriptures: *He* (the devil) *stood not in the truth.* (John 8:44). On this subject St. Augustine says: *In creating the Angels He endowed them with good will, that is, with pure love that they might adhere to Him, giving them existence and adorning them with grace at one and the same time. Hence we are to believe that the holy Angels were never without good will, that is, the love of God.*¹⁸

As to their knowledge we have this testimony of Holy Scripture: *Thou, my Lord, O king, art wise, according to the wisdom of an angel of God, to understand all things upon earth.* (2 Kings 14:20). Finally, the inspired

16. On God as the exemplary cause of creation see *Summa Theol.* 1a. xlv. 3.

17. On creation see *Summa Theol.* 1a. xlv.

18. *De Civit. Dei*, lib. xii. c. 9.

David ascribes power to them, saying that they are *mighty in strength, and execute his word* (Ps. 102:20); and on this account they are often called in Scripture the *powers* and the *armies of the Lord*.¹⁹

But although they were all endowed with celestial gifts, very many, having rebelled against God, their Father and Creator, were hurled from those high mansions of bliss, and shut up in the darkest dungeon of earth, there to suffer for eternity the punishment of their pride. Speaking of them the Prince of the Apostles says: *God spared not the angels that sinned, but delivered them, drawn by infernal ropes to the lower Hell, unto torments, to be reserved unto judgment.* (2 Pet. 2:4).²⁰

FORMATION OF THE UNIVERSE

The earth also God commanded to stand in the midst of the world, rooted in its own foundation, and *made the mountains ascend, and the plains descend into the place which he had founded for them.* That the waters should not inundate the earth, He *set a bound which they shall not pass over; neither shall they return to cover the earth.* (Ps. 103:5, 8, 9). He next not only clothed and adorned it with trees and every variety of plant and flower, but filled it, as He had already filled the air and water, with innumerable kinds of living creatures.²¹

PRODUCTION OF MAN

Lastly, He formed man from the slime of the earth, so created and constituted in body as to be immortal and impassible, not, however, by the strength of nature, but by the bounty of God. Man's soul He created to His own image and likeness; gifted him with free will, and tempered all his motions and appetites so as to subject them, at all times, to the dictates of reason. He then added the admirable gift of original right-

19. On the Angels see *Summa Theol.* 1a., 1 and following.

20. On the fall and punishment of the Angels see *Summa Theol.* 1a. lxiii. lxiv.

21. On the formation of the universe see *Summa Theol.* 1a. lxxv-lxxiv.

teousness, and next gave him dominion over all other animals. By referring to the sacred history of Genesis the pastor will easily make himself familiar with these things for the instruction of the faithful.²²

“Of all Things Visible and Invisible”

What we have said, then, of the creation of the universe is to be understood as conveyed by the words *heaven* and *earth*, and is thus briefly set forth by the Prophet: *Thine are the heavens, and thine is the earth: the world and the fulness thereof thou hast founded.* (Ps. 88:12). Still more briefly the Fathers of the Council of Nice expressed this truth by adding in their Creed these words: *of all things visible and invisible*. Whatever exists in the universe, whatever we confess to have been created by God, either falls under the senses and is included in the word *visible*, or is an object of mental perception and intelligence and is expressed by the word *invisible*.

God Preserves, Rules and Moves All Created Things

We are not, however, to understand that God is in such wise the Creator and Maker of all things that His works, when once created and finished, could thereafter continue to exist unsupported by His omnipotence. For as all things derive existence from the Creator's supreme power, wisdom, and goodness, so unless preserved continually by His Providence, and by the same power which produced them, they would instantly return into their nothingness. This the Scriptures declare when they say: *How could anything endure if thou wouldst not? or be preserved, if not called by thee?* (Wis. 11:26).

Not only does God protect and govern all things by His Providence, but He also by an internal power impels to motion and action whatever moves and acts, and

22. On the production of man see *Summa Theol.* 1a. xc. and following.

this in such a manner that, although He excludes not, He yet precedes the agency of secondary causes. For His invisible influence extends to all things, and, as the Wise Man says, reaches *from end to end mightily, and ordereth all things sweetly*. (Wis. 8:1). This is the reason why the Apostle, announcing to the Athenians the God whom, not knowing, they adored, said: He is *not far from every one of us: for in him we live, and move, and are*. (Acts 17:27–28).²³

Creation Is the Work of the Three Persons

Let so much suffice for the explanation of the first Article of the Creed. It may not be superfluous, however, to add that creation is the common work of the Three Persons of the Holy and undivided Trinity—of the Father, whom according to the doctrine of the Apostles we here declare to be Creator of Heaven and earth; of the Son, of whom the Scripture says, *all things were made by him* (John 1:3); and of the Holy Ghost, of whom it is written: *The spirit of God moved over the waters* (Gen. 1:2), and again, *By the word of the Lord the heavens were established; and all the power of them by the spirit of his mouth*. (Ps. 32:6).²⁴

23. On the divine government of the world and movement of all things see *Summa Theol.* 1a. ciii. and following.

24. On this subject see *Summa Theol.* 1a. xlv. 6.

ARTICLE II

“And in Jesus Christ, His Only Son, Our Lord”

ADVANTAGES OF FAITH IN THIS ARTICLE

That wonderful and superabundant are the blessings which flow to the human race from the belief and profession of this Article we learn from these words of St. John: *Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God abideth in him, and he in God* (1 John 4:15); and also from the words of Christ the Lord, proclaiming the Prince of the Apostles blessed for the confession of this truth: *Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but my Father who is in Heaven.* (Matt. 16:17). For this Article is the most firm basis of our salvation and redemption.

But as the fruit of these admirable blessings is best known by considering the ruin brought on man by his fall from that most happy state in which God had placed our first parents, let the pastor be particularly careful to make known to the faithful the cause of this common misery and calamity.

When Adam had departed from the obedience due to God and had violated the prohibition, *Of every tree of paradise thou shalt eat: But of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat, for in what day soever thou shalt eat of it, thou shalt die the death* (Gen. 2:16), he fell into the extreme misery of losing the sanctity and righteousness in which he had been placed, and of becoming subject to all those other evils which have been explained more fully by the holy Council of Trent.

Wherefore, the pastor should not omit to remind the faithful that the guilt and punishment of original sin were not confined to Adam, but justly descended from him, as from their source and cause, to all pos-

terity. (*Rom.* 5:12). The human race, having fallen from its elevated dignity, no power of men or Angels could raise it from its fallen condition and replace it in its primitive state. To remedy the evil and repair the loss it became necessary that the Son of God, whose power is infinite, clothed in the weakness of our flesh, should remove the infinite weight of sin and reconcile us to God in His blood.¹

NECESSITY OF FAITH IN THIS ARTICLE

The belief and profession of this our redemption, which God declared from the beginning, are now, and always have been, necessary to salvation. In the sentence of condemnation pronounced against the human race immediately after the sin of Adam the hope of redemption was held out in these words, which announced to the devil the loss he was to sustain by man's redemption: *I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed: she shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel.* (*Gen.* 3:15).

The same promise God again often confirmed and more distinctly manifested to those chiefly whom He desired to make special objects of His favor; among others to the Patriarch Abraham, to whom He often declared this mystery, but more explicitly when, in obedience to His command, Abraham was prepared to sacrifice his only son Isaac. *Because, said God, thou hast done this thing, and hast not spared thy only-begotten son for my sake; I will bless thee, and I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand that is by the sea shore. Thy seed shall possess the gates of their enemies, and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because thou hast obeyed my voice.* (*Gen.* 22:16–18). From these words it was easy to infer that He who was to deliver mankind from the ruthless tyranny of Satan was to be descended from Abraham;

1. On original sin and the necessity of the Incarnation see *Summa Theol.* 1a. 2ae. lxxxi-lxxxiii; 3a. i.; Council of Trent, Sess. v.

and that while He was the Son of God, He was to be born of the seed of Abraham according to the flesh.

Not long after, to preserve the memory of this promise, God renewed the same covenant with Jacob, the grandson of Abraham. When in a vision Jacob saw a ladder standing on earth, and its top reaching to Heaven, and the angels of God ascending and descending by it (*Gen. 28:12*), as the Scriptures testify, he also heard the Lord, who was leaning on the ladder, say to him: *I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac; the land, wherein thou sleepest, I will give to thee and to thy seed. And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth. Thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south; and in thee and thy seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed.* (*Gen. 28:13–14*).

Nor did God cease afterwards to excite in the posterity of Abraham and in many others, the expectation of a Saviour, by renewing the recollection of the same promise; for after the establishment of the Jewish State and religion it became better known to His people. Types signified and men foretold what and how great blessings the Saviour and Redeemer, Christ Jesus, was to bring to mankind. And indeed the Prophets, whose minds were illuminated with light from above, foretold the birth of the Son of God, the wondrous works which He wrought while on earth, His doctrine, character, life, death, Resurrection, and the other mysterious circumstances regarding Him—and all these they announced to the people as graphically as if they were passing before their eyes.² With the exception that one has reference to the future and the other to the past, we can discover no difference between the predictions of the Prophets and the preaching of the Apostles, between the faith of the ancient Patriarchs and that of Christians.³

2. See *Is. 7:14; 8:3; 9:5; 11:1–53; Jer. 23:6; 30:9; Dan. 7:13; 9:24.*

3. On the necessity of faith in Christ see *Summa Theol.* 2a. 2ae. ii. 7.

But we are now to speak of the several parts of this Article.

"Jesus"

Jesus is the proper name of the God-man and signifies Saviour: a name given Him not accidentally, or by the judgment or will of man, but by the counsel and command of God.⁴ For the Angel announced to Mary His mother: *Behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a son; and thou shalt call his name Jesus.* (Luke 1:31). He afterwards not only commanded Joseph, who was espoused to the Virgin, to call the child by that name, but also declared the reason why He should be so called. *Joseph, son of David,* said the Angel, *fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son and thou shalt call his name Jesus. For he shall save his people from their sins.* (Matt. 1:20).

In the Sacred Scriptures we meet with many who were called by this name. So, for example, was called the son of Nave, who succeeded Moses, and, by special privilege denied to Moses, conducted into the land of promise the people whom Moses had delivered from Egypt; and also the son of Josedech, the priest.⁵ But how much more appropriate it is to call by this name our Saviour, who gave light, liberty and salvation, not to one people only, but to all men, of all ages—to men oppressed, not by famine, or Egyptian or Babylonian bondage, but sitting in the shadow of death and fettered by the galling chains of sin and of the devil—who purchased for them a right to the inheritance of Heaven and reconciled them to God the Father! In those men who were designated by the same name we see

4. On the name Jesus see *Summa Theol.* 3a. xxxvii. 2.

5. Josue, the son of Nave, is called Jesus (*Eccl.* 46:1), as is also the son of Sirach (*Eccl.* 50:29). Jesus, the son of Josedech, is mentioned often in Esdras, Aggeus and Zacharias, and he it is of whom St. Luke speaks (3:29) as being descended from Eliezer.

foreshadowed Christ the Lord, by whom the blessings just enumerated were poured out on the human race.

All other names which according to prophecy were to be given by divine appointment to the Son of God, are comprised in this one name Jesus; for while they partially signified the salvation which He was to bestow upon us, this name included the force and meaning of all human salvation.

“Christ”

To the name *Jesus* is added that of *Christ*, which signifies *the anointed*. This name is expressive of honor and office, and is not peculiar to one thing only, but common to many; for in the Old Law priests and kings, whom God, on account of the dignity of their office, commanded to be anointed, were called christs. For priests commend the people to God by unceasing prayer, offer sacrifice to Him, and turn away His wrath from mankind. Kings are entrusted with the government of the people; and to them principally belong the authority of the law, the protection of innocence and the punishment of guilt. As, therefore, both these functions seem to represent the majesty of God on earth, those who were appointed to the royal or sacerdotal office were anointed with oil. Furthermore, since Prophets, as the interpreters and ambassadors of the immortal God, have unfolded to us the secrets of Heaven and by salutary precepts and the prediction of future events have exhorted to amendment of life, it was customary to anoint them also.

When Jesus Christ our Saviour came into the world, He assumed these three characters of Prophet, Priest and King, and was therefore called *Christ*, having been anointed for the discharge of these functions, not by mortal hand or with earthly ointment, but by the power of His heavenly Father and with a spiritual oil; for the plenitude of the Holy Spirit and a more copious effusion of all gifts than any other created being is capable of receiving were poured into

His soul. This the Prophet clearly indicates when he addresses the Redeemer in these words: *Thou hast loved justice, and hated iniquity: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.* (Ps. 44: 8). The same is also more explicitly declared by the Prophet Isaiah: *The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me: he hath sent me to preach to the meek.* (Is. 61:1).

Jesus Christ, therefore, was the great Prophet and Teacher, from whom we have learned the will of God and by whom the world has been taught the knowledge of the heavenly Father. The name *prophet* belongs to Him preeminently, because all others who were dignified with that name were His disciples, sent principally to announce the coming of that Prophet who was to save all men.

Christ was also a Priest, not indeed of the same order as were the priests of the tribe of Levi in the Old Law, but of that of which the Prophet David sang: *Thou art a priest for ever according to the order of Melchisedech.* (Ps. 109:4). This subject the Apostle fully and accurately develops in his Epistle to the Hebrews.

Christ not only as God, but also as man and partaker of our nature, we acknowledge to be a King. Of Him the Angel testified: *He shall reign in the house of Jacob for ever. And of his kingdom there shall be no end.* (Luke 1:32-33). This kingdom of Christ is spiritual and eternal, begun on earth but perfected in Heaven. He discharges by His admirable Providence the duties of King towards His Church, governing and protecting her against the assaults and snares of her enemies, legislating for her and imparting to her not only holiness and righteousness, but also the power and strength to persevere. But although the good and the bad are found within the limits of this kingdom, and thus all men by right belong to it, yet those who in conformity with His commands lead unsullied and innocent lives, experience beyond all others the sovereign goodness and beneficence of our King. Although

descended from the most illustrious race of kings, He obtained this kingdom not by hereditary or other human right, but because God bestowed on Him as man all the power, dignity and majesty of which human nature is capable. To Him, therefore, God delivered the government of the whole world, and to this His sovereignty, which has already commenced, all things shall be made fully and entirely subject on the day of judgment.⁶

“His Only Son”

In these words, mysteries more exalted with regard to Jesus are proposed to the faithful as objects of their belief and contemplation; namely, that He is the Son of God, and true God, like the Father who begot Him from eternity. We also confess that He is the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, equal in all things to the Father and the Holy Ghost; for in the Divine Persons nothing unequal or unlike should exist, or even be imagined to exist, since we acknowledge the essence, will and power of all to be one. This truth is both clearly revealed in many passages of Holy Scripture and sublimely announced in the testimony of St. John: *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.* (John 1:1).

But when we are told that Jesus is the Son of God, we are not to understand anything earthly or mortal in His birth; but are firmly to believe and piously to adore that birth by which, from all eternity, the Father begot the Son—a mystery which reason cannot fully conceive or comprehend, and at the contemplation of which, overwhelmed, as it were, with admiration, we should exclaim with the Prophet: *Who shall declare his generation?* (Is. 53:8). On this point, then, we are to believe that the Son is of the same nature, of the

6. On Christ as Prophet see *Summa Theol.* 2a. 2ae. clxxiv. 4. ad 3; 3a. vii. 8; xxxi. 2. On the Priesthood of Christ see *ibid.* 3a. xxii; on the Headship of Christ see *ibid.* 3a. viii. The meaning of the words, “kingdom of God,” are explained under the second Petition of the Lord’s Prayer.

same power and wisdom, with the Father, as we more fully profess in these words of the Nicene Creed: *And in one Lord Jesus Christ, his Only-begotten Son, born of the Father before all ages, God of God, light of light, true God of true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial to the Father, by whom all things were made.*

Among the different comparisons employed to elucidate the mode and manner of this eternal generation that which is borrowed from the production of thought in our mind seems to come nearest to its illustration, and hence St. John calls the Son the Word. For as our mind, in some sort understanding itself, forms an image of itself, which theologians express by the term *word*, so God, as far as we may compare human things to divine, understanding Himself, begets the eternal Word. It is better, however, to contemplate what faith proposes, and in the sincerity of our souls to believe and confess that Jesus Christ is true God and true Man—as God, begotten of the Father before all ages, as Man, born in time of Mary, His Virgin Mother.⁷

While we thus acknowledge His twofold Nativity; we believe Him to be one Son, because His divine and human natures meet in one Person. As to His divine generation He has no brethren or coheirs, being the Only-begotten Son of the Father, while we mortals are the work of His hands. But if we consider His birth as man, He not only calls many by the name of brethren, but treats them as such, since He admits them to share with Him the glory of His paternal inheritance. They are those who by faith have received Christ the Lord, and who really, and by works of charity, show forth the faith which they profess in words. Hence the Apostle calls Christ, *the first-born amongst many brethren.* (*Rom.* 8:29).⁸

7. On the eternal generation and Sonship of Christ see *Summa Theol.* 1a. xxvii. 2; xxxiv.

8. These thoughts are further developed in the explanation of the opening words of the Lord's Prayer, p. 544.

“Our Lord”

Of our Saviour many things are recorded in Sacred Scripture. Some of these, it is evident, apply to Him as God and some as man, because from His two natures He received the different properties which belong to both. Hence we say with truth that Christ is Almighty, Eternal, Infinite, and these attributes He has from His Divine Nature; again, we say of Him that He suffered, died, and rose again, which are properties manifestly that belong to His human nature.

Besides these terms, there are others common to both natures; as when in this Article of the Creed we say *Our Lord*. If, then, this name applies to both natures, rightly is He to be called Our Lord. For as He, as well as the Father, is the eternal God, so is He Lord of all things equally with the Father; and as He and the Father are not the one, one God, and the other, another God, but one and the same God, so likewise He and the Father are not the one, one Lord, and the other, another Lord.

As man, He is also for many reasons appropriately called *Our Lord*. First, because He is our Redeemer, who delivered us from sin, He deservedly acquired the power by which He truly is and is called Our Lord. This is the doctrine of the Apostle: *He humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross. For which cause God also hath exalted him, and hath given him a name which is above all names: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of those that are in Heaven, on earth, and under the earth: and that every tongue should confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father.* (Phil. 2:9–10). And of Himself He said, after His Resurrection: *All power is given to me in Heaven and in earth.* (Matt. 28:18).

He is also called *Lord* because in one Person both natures, the human and the divine, are united; and even though He had not died for us, He would have

yet deserved, by this admirable union, to be constituted common Lord of all created things, particularly of the faithful who obey and serve Him with all the fervor of their souls.

DUTIES OWED TO CHRIST OUR LORD

It remains, therefore, that the pastor remind the faithful that from Christ we take our name and are called Christians; that we cannot be ignorant of the extent of His favors, particularly since by His gift of faith we are enabled to understand all these things. We, above all others, are under the obligation of devoting and consecrating ourselves forever, like faithful servants, to our Redeemer and Our Lord.

This indeed, we promised at the doors of the church when about to be baptized; for we then declared that we renounced the devil and the world, and gave ourselves unreservedly to Jesus Christ. But if to be enrolled as soldiers of Christ we consecrated ourselves by so holy and solemn a profession to Our Lord, what punishments should we not deserve if after our entrance into the Church, and after having known the will and laws of God and received the grace of the Sacraments, we were to form our lives upon the precepts and maxims of the world and the devil, just as though when cleansed in the waters of Baptism, we had pledged our fidelity to the world and to the devil, and not to Christ the Lord and Saviour!

What heart so cold as not to be inflamed with love by the kindness and good will exercised toward us by so great a Lord, who, though holding us in His power and dominion as slaves ransomed by His blood, yet embraces us with such ardent love as to call us not servants, but friends and brethren? This, assuredly, supplies the most just, and perhaps the strongest, claim to induce us always to acknowledge, venerate, and adore Him as Our Lord.

ARTICLE III

“Who Was Conceived By the Holy Ghost, Born of the Virgin Mary”

IMPORTANCE OF THIS ARTICLE

From what has been said in the preceding Article, the faithful can understand that in bringing us from the relentless tyranny of Satan into liberty, God has conferred a singular and surpassing blessing on the human race. But if we place before our eyes also the plan and means by which He deigned chiefly to accomplish this, then, indeed, we shall see that there is nothing more glorious or magnificent than this divine goodness and beneficence towards us.

First Part of this Article: “Who was Conceived”

The pastor, then, should enter on the exposition of this third Article by developing the grandeur of this mystery, which the Sacred Scriptures very frequently propose for our consideration as the principal source of our eternal salvation. Its meaning he should teach to be that we believe and confess that the same Jesus Christ, our only Lord, the Son of God, when He assumed human flesh for us in the womb of the Virgin, was not conceived like other men, from the seed of man, but in a manner transcending the order of nature, that is, by the power of the Holy Ghost (*Matt*, 1:20; *Luke* 1:35); so that the same Person, remaining God as He was from eternity, became man, what He was not before.

That such is the meaning of the above words is clear from the Creed of the Holy Council of Constantinople, which says: *Who for us men, and for our salvation, came down from Heaven, and became incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man.*

The same truth we also find unfolded by St. John the Evangelist, who imbibed from the bosom of the Lord and Saviour Himself the knowledge of this most profound mystery. For when he had declared the nature of the Divine Word as follows: *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God*, he concluded: *And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.* (John 1:1, 14).

The Word, which is a Person of the Divine Nature, assumed human nature in such a manner that there should be one and the same Person in both the divine and human natures. Hence this admirable union preserved the actions and properties of both natures; and as Pope St. Leo the Great said: *The lowliness of the inferior nature was not consumed in the glory of the superior, nor did the assumption of the inferior lessen the glory of the superior.*¹

“By the Holy Ghost”

As an explanation of the words in which this Article is expressed is not to be omitted, the pastor should teach that when we say that the Son of God was conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, we do not mean that this Person alone of the Holy Trinity accomplished the mystery of the Incarnation. Although the Son only assumed human nature, yet all the Persons of the Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, were authors of this mystery.

It is a principle of Christian faith that whatever God does outside Himself in creation is common to the Three Persons, and that one neither does more than, nor acts without another. But that one emanates from another, this only cannot be common to all; for the Son is begotten of the Father only, and the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father and the Son. Anything, however, which proceeds from them extrinsically is the work of the Three Persons without difference of any sort, and of this lat-

1. Serm. i. de Nat. c. 2.

ter description is the Incarnation of the Son of God.

Of those things, nevertheless, that are common to all, the Sacred Scriptures often attribute some to one person, some to another. Thus, to the Father they attribute power over all things; to the Son, wisdom; to the Holy Ghost, love. Hence, as the mystery of the Incarnation manifests the singular and boundless love of God towards us, it is therefore in some sort peculiarly attributed to the Holy Ghost.

In The Incarnation Some Things Were Natural, Others Supernatural

In this mystery we perceive that some things were done which transcend the order of nature, some by the power of nature. Thus, in believing that the body of Christ was formed from the most pure blood of His Virgin Mother we acknowledge the operation of human nature, this being a law common to the formation of all human bodies, that they should be formed from the blood of the mother.

But what surpasses the order of nature and human comprehension is, that as soon as the Blessed Virgin assented to the announcement of the Angel in these words, *Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done unto me according to thy word* (Luke 1:38), the most sacred body of Christ was immediately formed, and to it was united a rational soul enjoying the use of reason; and thus in the same instant of time He was perfect God and perfect man. That this was the astonishing and admirable work of the Holy Ghost cannot be doubted; for according to the order of nature the rational soul is united to the body only after a certain lapse of time.²

Again—and this should overwhelm us with astonishment—as soon as the soul of Christ was united to His body, the Divinity became united to both; and thus at the same time His body was formed and animated, and the Divinity united to body and soul.

2. See *Summa Theol.* 1a. cxviii. 2.

Hence, at the same instant He was perfect God and perfect man, and the most Holy Virgin, having at the same moment conceived God and man, is truly and properly called Mother of God and man. This the Angel signified to her when he said: *Behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a son; and thou shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High.* (Luke 1:31–32). The event verified the prophecy of Isaias: *Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son.* (Is. 7:14). Elizabeth also declared the same truth when, being filled with the Holy Ghost, she understood the Conception of the Son of God, and said: *Whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?* (Luke 1:43).

As the body of Christ was formed of the pure blood of the immaculate Virgin without the aid of man, as we have already said, and by the sole operation of the Holy Ghost, so also, at the moment of His Conception, His soul was enriched with an overflowing fullness of the Spirit of God, and a superabundance of all graces. For God gave not to Him, as to others adorned with holiness and grace, His Spirit by measure, as St. John testifies (*John* 3:34), but poured into His soul the plenitude of all graces so abundantly that *of his fullness we all have received.* (*John* 1:16).

Although possessing that Spirit by which holy men attain the adoption of sons of God, He cannot, however, be called the adopted son of God; for since He is the Son of God by nature, the grace, or name of adoption, can on no account be deemed applicable to Him.³

HOW TO PROFIT BY THE MYSTERY OF THE INCARNATION

These truths comprise the substance of what appears to demand explanation regarding the admirable mystery of the Conception. To reap from them abundant fruit for salvation the faithful should particularly recall, and frequently reflect, that it is God who assumed

3. On this subject see *Summa Theol.* 3a. xxiii. 4.

human flesh; that the manner in which He became man exceeds our comprehension, not to say our powers of expression; and finally, that He vouchsafed to become man in order that we men might be born again as children of God. When to these subjects they shall have given mature consideration, let them, in the humility of faith, believe and adore all the mysteries contained in this Article, and not indulge a curious inquisitiveness by investigating and scrutinizing them—an attempt scarcely ever unattended with danger.⁴

Second Part of this Article: “Born of the Virgin Mary”

These words comprise another part of this Article. In its exposition the pastor should exercise considerable diligence, because the faithful are bound to believe that Jesus the Lord was not only conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, but was also born of the Virgin Mary. The words of the Angel who first announced the happy tidings to the world declare with what joy and delight of soul this mystery of our faith should be meditated upon. *Behold*, said the Angel, *I bring you good tidings of great joy, that shall be to all the people.* (Luke 2:10). The same sentiments are clearly conveyed in the song chanted by the heavenly host: *Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace to men of good will.* (Luke 2:14). Then began the fulfillment of the splendid promise made by God to Abraham, that in his seed *all the nations of the earth should one day be blessed* (Gen. 22:18); for Mary, whom we truly proclaim and venerate as Mother of God, because she brought forth Him who is at once God and man, was descended from King David.

THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST TRANSCENDS THE ORDER OF NATURE

But as the Conception itself transcends the order

4. On the Conception of Christ see *Summa Theol.* 3a. xxxi-xxxiv.

of nature, so also the birth of Our Lord presents to our contemplation nothing but what is divine.

Besides, what is admirable beyond the power of thoughts or words to express, He is born of His Mother without any diminution of her maternal virginity, just as He afterwards went forth from the sepulchre while it was closed and sealed, and entered the room in which His disciples were assembled, the doors being shut (*John* 20:19); or, not to depart from everyday examples, just as the rays of the sun penetrate without breaking or injuring in the least the solid substance of glass, so after a like but more exalted manner did Jesus Christ come forth from His Mother's womb without injury to her maternal virginity. This immaculate and perpetual virginity forms, therefore, the just theme of our eulogy. Such was the work of the Holy Ghost, who at the Conception and birth of the Son so favored the Virgin Mother as to impart to her fecundity while preserving inviolate her perpetual virginity.⁵

Christ Compared to Adam, Mary to Eve

The Apostle sometimes calls Jesus Christ the second Adam, and compares Him to the first Adam; for as in the first all men die, so in the second all are made alive (*1 Cor.* 15:21–22): and as in the natural order Adam was the father of the human race, so in the supernatural order Christ is the author of grace and of glory. (*Rom.* 5:14).

The Virgin Mother we may also compare to Eve, making the second Eve, that is, Mary, correspond to the first, as we have already shown that the second Adam, that is, Christ, corresponds to the first Adam. By believing the serpent, Eve brought malediction and death on mankind, and Mary, by believing the Angel, became the instrument of the divine goodness in bringing life and benediction to the human race. From Eve

5. On the Nativity of Christ see *Summa Theol.* 3a. xxxv, xxxvi.

we are born *children of wrath* (*Eph.* 2:3); from Mary we have received Jesus Christ, and through Him are regenerated children of grace. To Eve it was said: *In sorrow shalt thou bring forth children.* (*Gen.* 3:16). Mary was exempt from this law, for preserving her virginal integrity inviolate she brought forth Jesus the Son of God without experiencing, as we have already said, any sense of pain.

Types and Prophecies of the Conception and Nativity

The mysteries of this admirable Conception and Nativity being, therefore, so great and so numerous, it accorded with the plan of divine Providence to signify them by many types and prophecies. Hence the holy Fathers understood many things which we meet in the Sacred Scriptures to refer to these mysteries, particularly that gate of the sanctuary which Ezechiel saw closed (*Ezech.* 44:2); the stone cut out of the mountain without hands, which became a great mountain and filled the universe, of which we read in Daniel (*Dan.* 2:35); the rod of Aaron, which alone budded of all the rods of the princes of Israel (*Num.* 17:8); and the bush which Moses saw burn without being consumed. (*Exod.* 3:2).

The holy Evangelist describes in detail the history of the birth of Christ (*Luke* 2); but, as the pastor can easily recur to the Sacred Volume, it is unnecessary for us to say more on the subject.

Lessons which this Article Teaches

The pastor should labor to impress deeply on the minds and hearts of the faithful these mysteries, *which were written for our learning* (*Rom.* 15:4); first, that by the commemoration of so great a benefit they may make some return of gratitude to God, its author, and next, in order to place before their eyes, as a model for imitation, this striking and singular example of humility.

HUMILITY AND POVERTY OF CHRIST

What can be more useful, what better calculated to subdue the pride and haughtiness of the human heart, than to reflect frequently that God humbles Himself in such a manner as to assume our frailty and weakness, in order to communicate to us His glory; that God becomes man, and that He *at whose nod*, to use the words of Scripture, *the pillars of Heaven tremble and are affrighted* (Job 26:11), bows His supreme and infinite majesty to minister to man; that He whom the Angels adore in Heaven is born on earth! When such is the goodness of God towards us, what, I ask, should we not do to testify our obedience to His will? With what willingness and alacrity should we not love, embrace, and perform all the duties of humility?

The faithful should also consider the salutary lessons which Christ at His birth teaches before He begins to speak. He is born in poverty; He is born a stranger under a roof not His own; He is born in a lonely crib; He is born in the depth of winter! For St. Luke writes as follows: *And it came to pass, that when they were there, her days were accomplished, that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her first-born, and wrapped him up in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.* (Luke 2:6-7). Could the Evangelist have described under more humble terms the majesty and glory that filled the heavens and the earth? He does not say, there was no room in the inn, but there was no room for *him* who says, *the world is mine, and the fullness thereof.* (Ps. 49:12). As another Evangelist has expressed it: *He came unto his own, and his own received him not.* (John 1:11).

ELEVATION AND DIGNITY OF MAN

When the faithful have placed these things before their eyes, let them also reflect that God condescended to assume the lowliness and frailty of our flesh in order

to exalt man to the highest degree of dignity. This single reflection, that He who is true and perfect God became man, supplies sufficient proof of the exalted dignity conferred on the human race by the divine bounty; since we may now glory that the Son of God is bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, a privilege not given to Angels, *for nowhere*, says the Apostle, *doth he take hold of the Angels: but of the seed of Abraham he taketh hold.* (Heb. 2:16).

DUTY OF SPIRITUAL NATIVITY

We must also take care lest to our great injury it should happen that just as there was no room for Him in the inn at Bethlehem, in which to be born, so likewise now, after He has been born in the flesh, He should find no room in our hearts in which to be born spiritually. For since He is most desirous of our salvation, this spiritual birth is the object of His most earnest solicitude.

As, then, by the power of the Holy Ghost, and in a manner superior to the order of nature, He was made man and was born, was holy and even holiness itself, so does it become our duty to be born, *not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, but of God* (John 1:13); to walk as new creatures *in newness of spirit* (Rom. 6:4-5; 7:6), and to preserve that holiness and purity of soul which so much becomes men regenerated by the Spirit of God. Thus shall we reflect some faint image of the holy Conception and Nativity of the Son of God, which are the objects of our firm faith, and believing which we revere and adore the wisdom of God in a mystery *which is hidden.* (1 Cor. 2:7).