

## THE FIRST ARTICLE

### *"I believe in God"*

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

There are those, however, who believe that God rules and sustains all things of nature, and nevertheless do not believe God is the overseer of the acts of man; hence they believe that human acts do not come under God's providence. They reason thus because they see in this world how the good are afflicted and how the evil enjoy good things, so that Divine Providence seems to disregard human affairs. Hence the words of Job are offered to apply to this view: "He cloth not consider our things; and He walketh about the poles of heaven."<sup>2</sup> But this is indeed absurd. It is just as though a person who is ignorant of medicine should see a doctor give water to one patient and wine to another. He would believe that this is mere chance, since he does not understand the science of medicine which for good reasons prescribes for one wine and for another water. So is it with God. For God in His just and wise Providence knows what is good and necessary for men; and hence He afflicts some who are good and allows certain wicked men to prosper. But he is foolish indeed who believes this is due to chance, because he does not know the causes and method of God's dealing with men. "I wish that God might speak with thee, and would open His lips to thee, that He might show thee the secrets of wisdom, and that His law is manifold: and thou mightest understand that He exacteth much less of thee than iniquity deserveth."<sup>3</sup>

We must, therefore, firmly believe that God governs and regulates not only all nature, but also the actions of men. "And they said: The Lord shall not see; neither shall the God of Jacob understand. Understand, ye senseless among the people, and, you fools, be wise at last. He that planted the ear, shall He not hear, or He that formed the eye, cloth He not consider? ... The Lord knoweth the thoughts of men."<sup>4</sup> God sees all things, both our thoughts and the hidden desires of our will. Thus, the necessity of doing good is especially imposed on man since all these thoughts, words and actions are known in the sight of God: "All things are naked and open to His eyes."<sup>5</sup>

We believe that God who rules and regulates all things is but one God. This is seen in that wherever the regulation of human affairs is well arranged, there the group is found to be ruled and provided for by one, not many. For a number of heads often brings dissension in their subjects. But since divine government exceeds in every way that which is merely human, it is evident that the government of the world is not by many gods, but by one only.<sup>6</sup>

### Some Motives for Belief in Many Gods

There are four motives which have led men to believe in a number of gods. (1) The dullness of the human intellect. Dull men, not capable of going beyond sensible things, did not believe anything existed except physical bodies. Hence, they held that the world is disposed and ruled by those bodies which to them seemed most beautiful and most valuable in this world. And, accordingly, to things such as the sun, the moon and the stars, they attributed and gave a divine worship. Such men are like to one who, going to a royal court to see the king, believes that whoever is sumptuously dressed or of official position is the king! "They have imagined either the sun and moon or the circle of the stars... to be the gods that rule the world. With whose beauty, if they being delighted, took them to be gods."<sup>7</sup>

(2) The second motive was human adulation. Some men, wishing to fawn upon kings and rulers, obey and subject themselves to them and show them honour which is due to God alone. After the death of these rulers, sometimes men make them gods, and sometimes this is done even whilst they are living. "That every nation may know that Nabuchodonosor is god of the earth, and besides him there is no other."<sup>8</sup>

(3) The human affection for sons and relatives was a third motive. Some, because of the excessive love which they had for their family, caused statues of them to be erected after their death, and gradually a divine honour was attached to

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<sup>1</sup> Ps. xiii. 1

<sup>2</sup> Job., xxii. 14.

<sup>3</sup> Job, xi. 5-6.

<sup>4</sup> Ps. xciii. 7-11.

<sup>5</sup> Heb., iv. 13.

<sup>6</sup> "There is but one God, not many gods. We attribute to God the highest goodness and perfection, and it is impossible that what is highest and absolutely perfect could be found in many. If a being lack that which constitutes supreme perfection, it is, therefore, imperfect and cannot have the nature of God" ("Roman Catechism," The Creed, First Article, 7).

<sup>7</sup> Wis., xiii. 2-3.

<sup>8</sup> Judith, v. 29.

these statues.<sup>9</sup> “For men serving either their affections or their kings, gave the incommunicable Name to stones and wood.”<sup>2</sup>

(4) The last motive is the malice of the devil. The devil wished from the beginning to be equal to God, and thus he said: “I will ascend above the height of the clouds. I will be like the Most High.”<sup>3</sup> The devil still entertains this desire. His entire purpose is to bring about that man adore him and offer sacrifices to him; not that he takes delight in a dog or cat that is offered to him, but he does relish the fact that thereby irreverence is shown to God. Thus, he spoke to Christ: “All these will I give Thee, if falling down Thou wilt adore me.”<sup>4</sup> For this reason those demons who entered into idols said that they would be venerated as gods. “All the gods of the Gentiles are demons.”<sup>5</sup> “The things which the heathens sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God.”<sup>6</sup>

Although all this is terrible to contemplate, yet at times there are many who fall into these above-mentioned four causes. Not by their words and hearts, but by their actions, they show that they believe in many gods. Thus, those who believe that the celestial bodies influence the will of man and regulate their affairs by astrology, really make the heavenly bodies gods, and subject themselves to them. “Be not afraid of the signs of heaven which the heathens fear. For the laws of the people are vain.”<sup>7</sup> In the same category are all those who obey temporal rulers more than God, in that which they ought not; such actually set these up as gods. “We ought to obey God rather than men.”<sup>8</sup> So also those who love their sons and kinsfolk more than God show by their actions that they believe in many gods; as likewise do those who love food more than God: “Whose god is their belly.”<sup>9</sup> Moreover, all who take part in magic or in incantations believe that the demons are gods, because they seek from the devil that which God alone can give, such as revealing the future or discovering hidden things. We must, therefore, believe that there is but one God.

#### **THE FIRST ARTICLE (CONTINUED):**

*“The Father Almighty, Creator of Heaven and Earth.”*

It has been shown that we must first of all believe there is but one God. Now, the second is that this God is the Creator and Maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible. Let us leave more subtle reasons for the present and show by a simple example that all things are created and made by God. If a person, upon entering a certain house, should feel a warmth at the door of the house, and going within should feel a greater warmth, and so on the more he went into its interior, he would believe that somewhere within was a fire, even if he did not see the fire itself which caused this heat which he felt. So also is it when we consider the things of this world. For one finds all things, arranged in different degrees of beauty and worth, and the closer things approach to God, the more beautiful and better they are found to be. Thus, the heavenly bodies are more beautiful and nobler than those which are below them; and, likewise, the invisible things in relation to the visible. Therefore, it must be seen that all these things proceed from one God who gives His being and beauty to each and everything. “All men are vain, in whom there is not the knowledge of God and who by these good things that are seen could not understand Him that is. Neither by attending to the works have acknowledged who was the workman.... For by the greatness of the beauty, and of the creature, the creator of them may be seen, so as to be known thereby.”<sup>10</sup> Thus, therefore, it is certain for us that all things in the world are from God.

#### **Errors Relating to the First Article**

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

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<sup>1</sup> All this is fully explained in the fourteenth chapter of the Book of Wisdom, verses 15-21.

<sup>2</sup> Wis., xiv. 21.

<sup>3</sup> Isa., xiv. 14

<sup>4</sup> Matt., iv. 9.

<sup>5</sup> Ps. cxv. 5.

<sup>6</sup> 1 Cor., x. 20.

<sup>7</sup> Jerem., x. 2-3.

<sup>8</sup> Acts. v. 29.

<sup>9</sup> Phil., iii. 19.

<sup>10</sup> Wis., xiii. 1, 5.

things visible and invisible.”<sup>1</sup> “In the beginning God created heaven and earth”<sup>2</sup> “All things were made by Him”<sup>3</sup>

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

The third is the error which holds that God made the world from preajcent matter (*ex preajcenti materia*). They are led to this view because they wish to measure divine power according to human power; and since man cannot make anything except from material which already lies at hand, so also it must be with God. But this is false. Man needs matter to make anything, because he is a builder of particular things and must bring form out of definite material. He merely determines the form of his work, and can be only the cause of the form that he builds. God, however, is the universal cause of all things, and He not only creates the form but also the matter. Hence, He makes out of nothing, and thus it is said in the Creed: “the Creator of heaven and earth.”<sup>6</sup> We must see in this the difference between making and creating. To create is to make something out of nothing; and if everything were destroyed, He could again make all things. He, thus, makes the blind to see, raises up the dead, and works other similar miracles. “Thy power is at hand when Thou wilt.”<sup>7</sup>

### **Good Effects of our Faith**

From a consideration of all this, one is led to a fivefold benefit.

(1) We are led to a knowledge of the divine majesty. Now, if a maker is greater than the things he makes, then God is greater than all things which He has made. “With whose beauty, if they being delighted, took them to be gods, let them know how much the Lord of them is more beautiful than they... Or if they admired their power and their effects, let them understand by them that He that made them, is mightier than they.”<sup>8</sup> Hence, whatsoever can even be affirmed or thought of is less than God. “Behold: God is great, exceeding our knowledge.”<sup>9</sup>

(2) We are led to give thanks to God. Because God is the Creator of all things, it is certain that what we are and what we have is from God: “What hast thou that thou hast not received.”<sup>10</sup> “The earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof; the world and all they that dwell therein.”<sup>11</sup> “We, therefore, must render thanks to God: What shall I render to the Lord for all the things that He hath rendered to me?”<sup>12</sup>

(3) We are led to bear our troubles in patience. Although every created thing is from God and is good according to its nature, yet, if something harms us or brings us pain, we believe that such come from God, not as a fault in Him, but because God permits no evil that is not for good. Affliction purifies from sin, brings low the guilty, and urges on the good to a love of God: “If we have received good things from the hand of God, why should we not receive evil?”<sup>13</sup>

(4) We are led to a right use of created things. Thus, we ought to use created things as having been made by God’ for two purposes: for His glory, “since all things are made for Himself”<sup>14</sup> (that is, for the glory of God), and finally for our profits: “Which the Lord thy God created for the service of all the nations.”<sup>15</sup> Thus, we ought to use things for God’s glory in order to please Him no less than for our own profit, that is, so as to avoid sin in using them: “All things are Thine, and we have given Thee what we received of Thy hand.”<sup>16</sup> Whatever we have, be it learning or beauty, we must revere all and use all for the glory of God.

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<sup>1</sup> In the Nicene Creed.

<sup>2</sup> Gen., i. 1.

<sup>3</sup> John, i. 3.

<sup>4</sup> II Peter, iii. 4.

<sup>5</sup> Ps. cxlviii. 5.

<sup>6</sup> In the Nicene Creed.

<sup>7</sup> Wis., xii. 18.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., xiii. 3-4.

<sup>9</sup> Job, xxxvi. 26.

<sup>10</sup> I Cor., iv. 7.

<sup>11</sup> Ps. xxiii. 1.

<sup>12</sup> Ps. cxv. 12.

<sup>13</sup> Job, ii. 10.

<sup>14</sup> Prov., xvi. 4.

<sup>15</sup> Deut., iv. 19.

<sup>16</sup> I Paral., xxix. 14.

(5) We are led also to acknowledge the great dignity of man. God made all things for man: “Thou has subjected all things under his feet,”<sup>1</sup> and man is more like to God than all other creatures save the Angels: “Let us make man to Our image and likeness.”<sup>2</sup> God does not say this of the heavens or of the stars, but of man; and this likeness of God in man does not refer to the body but to the human soul, which has free will and is incorruptible, and therein man resembles God more than other creatures do. We ought, therefore, to consider the nobleness of man as less than the Angels but greater than all other creatures. Let us not, therefore, diminish this dignity by sin and by an inordinate desire for earthly things which are beneath us and are made for our service. Accordingly, we must rule over things of the earth and use them, and be subject to God by obeying and serving Him. And thus we shall come to the enjoyment of God forever.

## THE SECOND ARTICLE:

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

It is not only necessary for Christians to believe in one God who is the Creator of heaven and earth and of all things; but also they must believe that God is the Father and that Christ is the true Son of God. This, as St. Peter says, is not mere fable, but is certain and proved by the word of God on the Mount of Transfiguration. “For we have not by following artificial fables made known to you the power and presence of our Lord Jesus Christ; but we were eye-witnesses of His greatness. For He received from God the Father honour and glory, this voice coming down to Him from the excellent glory: “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear ye Him.” And this voice, we heard brought from heaven, when we were with Him in the holy mount.”<sup>3</sup> Christ Jesus Himself in many places called God His Father, and Himself the Son of God. Both the Apostles and the Fathers placed in the articles of faith that Christ is the Son of God by saying: “And (I believe) in Jesus Christ, His (i.e. God’s) only Son.”<sup>4</sup>

### Errors Relating to the Second Article

There were, however, certain heretics who erred in this belief. Photinus, for instance, believed that Christ is not the Son of God but a good man who, by a good life and by doing the will of God, merited to be called the son of God by adoption; and so Christ who lived a good life and did the will of God merited to be called the son of God. Moreover, this error would not have Christ living before the Blessed Virgin, but would have Him begin to exist only at His conception. Accordingly, there are here two errors: the first, that Christ is not the true Son of God according to His nature; and the second, that Christ in His entire being began to exist in time. Our faith, however, holds that He is the Son of God in His nature, and that He is from all eternity. Now, we have definite authority against these errors in the Holy Scriptures. Against the first error it is said that Christ is not only the Son, but also the only-begotten Son of the Father: “The only-begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him.”<sup>5</sup> And against the second error it is said: “Before Abraham was made, I AM”<sup>6</sup> It is evident that Abraham lived before the Blessed Virgin. And what the Fathers added to the other Creed [i.e. the Nicene Creed,] namely, “the only-begotten Son of God,” is against the first error; and “born of the Father before all ages” is against the second error. Sabellius said that Christ indeed was before the Blessed Virgin, but he held that the Father Himself became incarnate and, therefore, the Father and the Son is the same Person. This is an error because it takes away the Trinity of Persons in God, and against it is this authority: “I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent Me.”<sup>7</sup> It is clear that one cannot be sent from himself. Sabellius errs therefore, and in the “Symbol”<sup>8</sup> of the Fathers it is said: “God of God; Light of Light,” that is, we are to believe in God the Son from God the Father, and the Son who is Light from the Father who is Light.

Arius, although he would say that Christ was before the Blessed Virgin and that the Person of the Father is other than the Person of the Son, nevertheless made a three-fold attribution to Christ: (1) that the Son of God was a creature; (2) that He is not from eternity, but was formed the noblest of all creatures in time by God; (3) that God the Son is not of one nature with God the Father, and therefore that He was not true God. But this too is erroneous and contrary to the teaching of the Holy Scriptures. It is written: “I and the Father are one.”<sup>9</sup> That is, in nature; and therefore, just as the Father always existed, so also the Son; and just as the Father is true God, so also is the Son. That Christ is a creature, as said by Arius, is

<sup>1</sup> Ps. viii, 8.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. i. 26

<sup>3</sup> II Peter, i. 16.

<sup>4</sup> “Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and true God, like the Father who begot Him from all eternity. We also believe that He is the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, in all things equal to the Father and to the Holy Spirit. Since we acknowledge the essence, will and power of all the Divine Persons to be one, then in them nothing unequal or unlike should exist or even be imagined to exist” (“Roman Catechism” Second Article, 8).

<sup>5</sup> John, i. 18.

<sup>6</sup> John, viii. 58.

<sup>7</sup> John, viii. 16.

<sup>8</sup> “Symbol” (from the Greek, Symbolon, and the late Latin Symbolum) is a formal authoritative statement of the religious belief of the Church, referring here to the Nicene Creed. This treatise of St. Thomas is indeed called by him an “Explanation of the Symbol of the Apostles,” or the Apostles’ Creed.

<sup>9</sup> John, x. 30.

contradicted in the “Symbol” by the Fathers: “True God of true God;” and the assertion that Christ is not from eternity but in time is also contrary to the “Symbol”: “Begotten not made;” and finally, that Christ is not of the same substance as the Father is denied by the “Symbol”: “Consubstantial with the Father.”

it is therefore clear we must believe that Christ is the only-begotten of God, and the true Son of God, who always was with the Father, and that there is one Person of the Son and another of the Father who have the same divine nature.<sup>1</sup> All this we believe now through faith, but we shall know it with a perfect vision in the life eternal. Hence, we shall now speak somewhat of this for our own edification.

### The Divine Generation

It must be known that different things have different modes of generation. The generation of God is different from that of other things. Hence, we cannot arrive at a notion of divine generation except through the generation of that created thing which more closely approaches to a likeness to God. We have seen that nothing approaches in likeness to God more than the human soul. The manner of generation in the soul is effected in the thinking process in the soul of man, which is called a conceiving of the intellect. This conception takes its rise in the soul as from a father, and its effect is called the word of the intellect or of man. in brief, the soul by its act of thinking begets the word. So also the Son of God is the Word of God, not like a word that is uttered exteriorly (for this is transitory), but as a word is interiorly conceived; and this Word of God is of the one nature as God and equal to God.<sup>2</sup>

The testimony of St. John concerning the Word of God destroys these three heresies, viz., that of Photinus in the words: “in the beginning was the Word;”<sup>3</sup> that of Sabellius in saying: “And the Word was with God;”<sup>4</sup> and that of Arius when it says: “And the Word was God.”<sup>5</sup>

But a word in us is not the same as the Word in God. In us the word is an accident;”<sup>6</sup> whereas in God the Word is the same as God, since there is nothing in God that is not of the essence of God. No one would say God has not a Word, because such would make God wholly without knowledge; and therefore, as God always existed, so also did his Word ever exist- Just as a sculptor works from a form which he has previously thought out, which is his word; so also God makes all things by His Word, as it were through His art: “All things were made by Him.”<sup>7</sup>

Now, if the Word of God is the Son of God and all the words of God bear a certain likeness of this Word, then we ought to hear the word of God gladly; for such is a sign that we love God. We ought also) to believe the word of God whereby the Word of God dwells in us, who is Christ: “That Christ may dwell by faith in your hearts.”<sup>8</sup> “And you have not His word abiding in you.”<sup>9</sup> But we ought not only to believe that the Word of God dwells in us, but also we should meditate often upon this; for otherwise we will not be benefited to the extent that such meditation is a great help against sin: “Thy words have I hidden in my heart, that I may not sin against Thee.”<sup>10</sup> Again it is said of the just man: On His law he shall meditate day and night.”<sup>11</sup> And it is said of the Blessed virgin that she “kept all these words, pondering them in her heart.”<sup>12</sup> Then also, one should communicate the word of God to others by advising, preaching and inflaming their hearts: “Let no evil speech proceed from your mouth; but that which is good, to the edification of faith.”<sup>13</sup> Likewise, “let the word of Christ dwell in you abundantly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another.”<sup>14</sup> So also “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, entreat, rebuke in all patience and doctrine.”<sup>15</sup> Finally, we ought to put

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<sup>1</sup> “... We believe Him (Christ) 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, and we men are the image and work of His hands” (“Roman Catechism,” loc. cit., 9-10).

<sup>2</sup> “Among the different comparisons brought forth to show the mode and manner of this eternal generation, that which is taken 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 our mind, understanding itself in some way, forms an image of itself which theologians have called the word; so God, in so far as we may compare human things to divine, understanding Himself, begets the Eternal Word. But it is more advantageous to consider what faith proposes, and with all sincerity of mind to believe and profess that Jesus Christ is true God and true Man God, begotten before all time; as Man, born in time of Mary, His Virgin Mother” (“Roman Catechism,” loc. cit., 9). St. Thomas treats more fully the eternal generation and Sonship of Christ in the Summa Theol., I, Q. xxvii, art. 2; Q. xxxiv.

<sup>3</sup> John, i. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> An accident is an attribute which is not part of the essence.

<sup>7</sup> John, i. 3.

<sup>8</sup> Eph., iii. 17.

<sup>9</sup> John, v. 38.

<sup>10</sup> Ps. cxviii. 11.

<sup>11</sup> Ps. i. 2.

<sup>12</sup> Luke, ii. 19.

<sup>13</sup> Eph., iv. 29.

<sup>14</sup> Colos, iii. 16.

<sup>15</sup> II Tim., iv. 2.

the word of God into practice: “Be ye doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.”<sup>1</sup>

The Blessed Virgin observed these five points when she gave birth to the Word of God. first, she heard what was said to her: “The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee.”<sup>2</sup> Then she gave her consent through faith: “Behold the handmaid of the Lord”<sup>3</sup> And she also received and carried the Word of the Lord in her womb. Then she brought forth the Word of God and, finally, she nourished and cared for Him. And so the Church sings: “Only a Virgin didst nourish Him who is King of the Angels.”<sup>4</sup>

### THE THIRD ARTICLE:

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

The Christian must not only believe in the Son of God, as we have seen, but also in His Incarnation. St. John, after having written of things subtle and difficult to understand,<sup>5</sup> points out the Incarnation to us when he says: “And the Word was made flesh.”<sup>6</sup> Now, in order that we may understand something of this, I give two illustrations at the outset.

It is clear that there is nothing more like the Word of God than the word which is conceived in our mind but not spoken. Now, no one knows this interior word in our mind except the one who conceives it, and then it is known to others only when it is pronounced. So also as long as the Word of God was in the heart of the Father, it was not known except by the Father Himself; but when the Word assumed flesh-as a word becomes audible-then was it first made manifest and known. “Afterwards He was seen upon earth and conversed with men.”<sup>7</sup> Another example is that, although the spoken word is known through hearing, yet it is neither seen nor touched, unless it is written on paper. So also the Word of God was made both visible and tangible when He became flesh. And as the paper upon which the word of a king is written is called the word of the king, so also Man to whom the Word of God is conjoined in one hypostasis<sup>8</sup> is called the Son of God. “Take thee a great book and write in it with a man’s pen.”<sup>9</sup> Therefore, the holy Apostles affirmed: “Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary.”

### Errors Relating to the Third Article

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

Origen said that Christ was born and came into the world to save even the devils, and, therefore, at the end of the world all the demons will be saved. But this is contrary to the Holy Scripture: “Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels.”<sup>10</sup> Consequently, to remove this error they added in the Creed: “Who for us men (not for the devils) and for our salvation, came down from heaven.” in this the love of God for us is made more apparent.

Photinus would have Christ born of the Blessed Virgin, but added that he was a mere man who by a good life in doing the will of God merited to become the son of God even as other holy men. This, too, is denied by this saying of John: “I came down from heaven, not to do My own will but the will of Him that sent Me.”<sup>11</sup> Now if Christ were not in heaven, He would not have descended from heaven, and were He a mere man, He would not have been in heaven. Hence, it is said in the Nicene Creed: “He came down from heaven.”

Manichaeus, however, said that Christ was always the Son of God and He descended from heaven, but He was not actually but only in appearance clothed in true flesh. But this is false, because it is not worthy of the Teacher of Truth to have anything to do with what is false, and just as He showed His physical Body, so it was really His: “Handle, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as you see Me to have.”<sup>12</sup> To remove this error, therefore, they added: “And He was incarnate.”

Ebion, who was a Jew, said that Christ was born of the Blessed Virgin in the ordinary human way.<sup>13</sup> But this is

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<sup>1</sup> James, i. 22.

<sup>2</sup> Luke, i. 35.

<sup>3</sup> Luke, i. 38.

<sup>4</sup> Fourth Responsory, Office of the Circumcision, Dominican Breviary.

<sup>5</sup> John, i. 1-13.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., i. 14.

<sup>7</sup> Baruch, iii. 38.

<sup>8</sup> Hypostasis is person distinct from nature as in the one hypostasis of Christ as distinct from His two natures, human and divine; also distinct from substance, as in the three hypostases of the Godhead, which are the same in substance.

<sup>9</sup> Isa., viii. 1.

<sup>10</sup> Matt., xxv. 41.

<sup>11</sup> John, vi. 38.

<sup>12</sup> Luke, xxiv. 39.

<sup>13</sup> “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 above the order of nature. i.e., by the power of the Holy Spirit; so that the same Person, remaining God as He was from all eternity, became man, what He was not before” (“Roman Catechism,” 3rd Article, 1).

false, for the Angel said of Mary: "That which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit."<sup>1</sup> And the holy Fathers to destroy this error, added: "By the Holy Spirit."

Valentinus believed that Christ was conceived by the Holy Spirit, but would have the Holy Spirit deposit a heavenly body in the Blessed Virgin, so that she contributed nothing to Christ's birth except to furnish a place for Him. Thus, he said, this Body appeared by means of the Blessed Virgin, as though she were a channel. This is a great error, for the Angel said: "And therefore also the Holy which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."<sup>2</sup> And the Apostle adds; "But when the fullness of time was come, God sent His Son, made of woman."<sup>3</sup> Hence the Creed says; "Born of the Virgin Mary."

Arius and Apollinarius held that, although Christ was the Word of God and was born of the Virgin Mary, nevertheless He did not have a soul, but in place of the soul was His divinity. This is contrary to the Scripture, for Christ says: "Now is My soul troubled."<sup>4</sup> And again: "My soul is sorrowful even unto death."<sup>5</sup> For this reason the Fathers added: "And was made man." Now, man is made up of body and soul. Christ had all that a true man has save sin. All the above mentioned errors and all others that can be offered are destroyed by this, that He was made man. The error of Eutyches particularly is destroyed by it. He held that, by a commixture of the divine nature of Christ with the human, He was neither purely divine nor purely human. This is not true, because by it Christ would not be a man. And so it is said: "He was made man." This destroys also the error of Nestorius, who said that the Son of God only by an indwelling was united to man. This, too, is false, because by this Christ would not be man but only in a man and that He became man is clear from these words: "He was in habit found as man."<sup>6</sup> "But now you seek to kill Me, a man who has spoken the truth to you, which I have heard of God."<sup>7</sup>

### Good Effects of these Considerations

We can learn something from all this. (1) Our faith is strengthened. If, for instance, someone should tell us about a certain foreign land which he himself had never seen, we would not believe him to the extent we would if he had been there. Now, before Christ came into the world, the Patriarchs and Prophets and John the Baptist told something of God; but men did not believe them as they believed Christ, who was with God, nay more, was one with God. Hence, far more firm is our faith in what is given us by Christ Himself: "No one hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him."<sup>8</sup> Thus, many mysteries of our faith which before the coming of Christ were hidden from us, are now made clear.

(2) Our hope is raised up. It is certain that the Son of Man did not come to us, assuming our flesh, for any trivial cause, but for our exceeding great advantage. For He made as it were a trade with us, assuming a living body and deigning to be born of the Virgin, in order that to us might be vouchsafed part of His divinity,<sup>9</sup> And thus He became man that He might make man divine.<sup>10</sup>

(3) Our charity is enkindled. There is no proof of divine charity so clear as that God, the Creator of all things, is made a creature; that Our Lord is become our brother, and that the Son of God is made the Son of man: "For God so loved the world as to give His only begotten Son."<sup>11</sup> Therefore, upon consideration of this our love for God ought to be re-ignited and burst into flame.

(4) This induces us to keep our souls pure. Our nature was exalted and ennobled by its union with God to the extent of being assumed into union with a Divine Person.<sup>12</sup>

Indeed, after the incarnation the Angel would not permit St. John to adore him, although he allowed this to be done before by even the greatest patriarchs.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, one who reflects on this exaltation of his nature and is ever conscious of it, should scorn to cheapen and lower himself and his nature by sin. Thus, says St. Peter: "By whom He hath given us most great and precious promises; that by these you may be made partakers of the divine nature; flying the

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<sup>1</sup> Matt., i. 20.

<sup>2</sup> Luke, i. 35.

<sup>3</sup> Gal., iv. 4.

<sup>4</sup> John, xii, 27.

<sup>5</sup> Matt., xxvi. 38.

<sup>6</sup> Phil., ii. 7.

<sup>7</sup> John, viii. 40.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., i. 18.

<sup>9</sup> "Thus, in the Mass, when the Priest puts wine and water in the chalice, he says: ". . . Grant that by the mystery of this water and wine we may be made partakers of His Divinity who vouchsafed to become partakers of our humanity, Jesus Christ, Thy Son, Our Lord."

<sup>10</sup> "Et sic factus est homo, ut hominem faceret Deum.

<sup>11</sup> John, iii. 16.

<sup>12</sup> "The Word, who 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" ("Roman Catechism," loc. cit., 2).

<sup>13</sup> "And after I had heard and seen, I fell down to adore before the feet of the Angel who showed me these things. And he said to me: 'See thou do it not,'" (Apoc., xxii. 8).

corruption of that concupiscence which is in the world.<sup>1</sup>

Finally, by consideration of all this, our desire to come to Christ is intensified. if a king had a brother who was away from him a long distance, that brother would desire to come to the king to see him, to be with him and to abide with him. So also Christ is our brother, and we should desire to be with Him and to be united to Him. “Wheresoever the body shall be, there the eagles also be gathered together”<sup>2</sup> The Apostles desired “to be dissolved and to be with Christ”<sup>3</sup> And it is this desire which grows in us as we meditate upon the Incarnation of Christ.”

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<sup>1</sup> II Peter, i, 4. ‘God deigned to assume the lowliness and frailty of our flesh in order to lift man up to the highest degree of dignity... We may now glory that the Son of God is bone of our bone, and flesh of the flesh, a privilege which is not granted to the Angels” (“Roman Catechism,” loc. cit., 1 1).

<sup>2</sup> Matt., xxiv. 28.

<sup>3</sup> Phil., i. 23.