

That God, through the merits of Christ Crucified, may give us grace to comprehend the Gospel with our mind, to profess it with our mouth, and to love it with our heart.

Application. Never be ashamed of the Catholic faith, or of the sign of the cross; let this be your motto: 'God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ' (Gal. vi. 14). Shun most carefully all intercourse with irreligious and wicked persons, and especially beware of such books as might stagger you in the true faith, or lead you astray from the path of virtue.

ON THE APOSTLES' CREED.

1. Where are the chief things which we must above all know and believe, briefly contained?

In the twelve articles of the Apostles' Creed.

2. Why is it called the '*Apostles' Creed*'?

Because it has come down to us from the Apostles.

THE FIRST ARTICLE.

'I believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.'

§ 1. *On God.*

'I believe in God.'

3. Who is God?

God is an infinitely perfect Spirit, the Lord of Heaven and earth, and the Author of all good.

4. Why do we call God a '*Spirit*'?

We call God a Spirit because He has understanding and free will, but no body (John iv. 24).

5. And why do we say that '*God is infinitely perfect*'?

Because God is not like created beings, good only

in some measure, but because He unites in Himself all good perfections without measure, or bounds, or number.

6. Which are the principal Attributes or Perfections of God?

These: God is eternal and unchangeable, omnipresent, omniscient or all-knowing, all-wise, all-powerful; He is infinitely holy and just; infinitely good, merciful, and long-suffering; infinitely true and faithful.

7. What means '*God is eternal*'?

God is eternal means that He is always, without beginning and without end.

'Before the mountains were made, or the earth and the world was formed; from eternity to eternity Thou art God' (Ps. lxxxix. 2).

8. What means '*God is unchangeable*'?

God is unchangeable means that He remains eternally the same, without any change either in Himself or in His decrees.

'With whom [God] there is no change, nor shadow of alteration' (James i. 17). 'My counsel shall stand, and all my will shall be done' (Isai. xlvi. 10).

9. What ought we to do, since God is eternal and unchangeable?

We ought to serve and love Him for ever and ever.

'Thou art the God of my heart, and the God that is my portion for ever' (Ps. lxxii. 26).

10. What means '*God is omnipresent*'?

God is omnipresent means that He is everywhere: in Heaven, on earth, and in all places.

'Do not I fill Heaven and earth? saith the Lord' (Jer. xxiii. 24). 'God is not far from every one of us; for in Him we live, and move, and are' (Acts xvii. 27, 28). Although God fills all space, nevertheless He is everywhere entire and perfect, and encompassed by no space; for He is *immense*.

11. What means '*God is omniscient*'?

God is omniscient means that He knows all things perfectly and from all eternity; He knows all things

past, present, and to come, even our most secret thoughts.

'The eyes of the Lord are far brighter than the sun, beholding round about all the ways of men, and the bottom of the deep, and looking into the hearts of men, into the most hidden parts; for all things were known to the Lord God before they were created: so also after they were perfected he beholdeth all things' (Eccles. xxiii. 28, 29). See the whole Psalm cxxxviii.—Examples: Predictions of Christ and of the Prophets.

12. What benefit do we derive from the frequent remembrance of God's omnipresence and omniscience?

1. It keeps us everywhere, even in secret, from evil, and incites us to good; and 2. It gives us courage and consolation in all difficulties and troubles.

1. 'It is better for me to fall into your hands without doing it, than to sin in the sight of the Lord' (Dan. xiii. 23). 'That thy alms may be in secret, and thy Father who seeth in secret will repay thee' (Matt. vi. 4). 2. 'Though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I will fear no evils, for Thou art with me' (Ps. xxii. 4). 'Behold my witness is in Heaven, and He that knoweth my conscience is on high' (Job xvi. 20).

13. What means 'God is all-wise'?

God is all-wise means that He knows how to dispose all things in the best manner, in order to attain His end.

'How great are Thy works, O Lord! Thou hast made all things in wisdom' (Ps. ciii. 24).—Examples: The child Moses saved; Joseph exalted; Aman disgraced.

14. What means 'God is all-powerful or almighty'?

God is all-powerful means that He can do anything, and has only to will, and the thing is done.

'Whatsoever the Lord pleased He hath done, in Heaven, in earth, in the sea, and in all the deeps' (Ps. cxxxiv. 6). 'Because no word shall be impossible with God' (Luke i. 37).—Examples: The Creation; the wonders in Egypt and in the desert.

15. To what should our belief in God's infinite power and infinite wisdom incite us?

It should incite us, 1. To place all our confidence in God; and 2. To be always resigned to His dispensations.

1. 'Put not your trust in the children of men, in whom there is no salvation. Blessed is he whose hope is in the Lord his God' (Ps. cxlv. 3, 5).—Ex.: Gedeon. 2. 'Commit thy way to the Lord, and trust in Him, and He will do it' (Ps. xxxvi. 5).—Ex.: Job.

16. What means 'God is holy'?

God is holy means that He loves and wills only what is good—*i.e.*, what is agreeable to His perfections—and that he abhors all that is evil.

'Thou hast loved justice, and hatedst iniquity' (Ps. xlv. 8).—Ex.: The giving of the Law on Mount Sinai.

17. What means 'God is just'?

God is just means that He rewards and punishes men according to their deserts.

'He will render to every one according to his works: . . . for there is no respect of persons with God' (Rom. ii. 6, 11).—Examples: The world punished by the deluge, and Sodom and Gomorrah destroyed by fire from heaven; but Noe and Lot preserved.

18. When will perfect retribution be made?

Perfect retribution will not be made until the soul is in the other world;¹ there is, however, even in this life, no true happiness for the wicked,² and no true unhappiness for the just.³

¹ Parable of the cockle and the wheat (Matt. xiii. 30); of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke xvi.) ² 'We wearied ourselves in the way of iniquity and destruction, and have walked through hard ways' (Wisd. v. 7).—Examples: Cain, Absalom, Achab, Antiochus. ³ 'The souls of the just are in the hand of God' (Wisd. iii. 1).—Examples: Joseph, Tobias, Susanna, Daniel, St. Paul (2 Cor. vii. 4).

19. To what should the remembrance of God's holiness and justness animate us?

It should animate us, 1. Carefully to avoid all evil, and to become more and more holy; and 2. Not to pride ourselves in our pretended righteousness.

1. 'Fear ye not them that kill the body, and are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him that can destroy both soul and body into hell' (Matt. x. 28). 'I am the Lord your God: be holy, because I am holy' (Levit. xi. 44). 2. 'I am not con-

scious to myself of anything, yet I am not hereby justified; but He that judgeth me is the Lord' (1 Cor. iv. 4).

20. What means '*God is good*'?

God is good means that out of love He will do good to all creatures, and that He really bestows innumerable blessings upon us.

'Thou lovest all things that are, and hatest none of the things which Thou hast made' (Wisd. xi. 25). 'Thus saith the Lord: Can a woman forget her infant, so as not to have pity on the son of her womb? And if she should forget, yet will not I forget thee' (Isai. xlix. 15).

21. Which is the greatest proof of God's love and goodness?

That He delivered His own Son up to death for the salvation of us sinners.

'God is charity. By this hath the charity of God appeared towards us, because God hath sent His Only-begotten Son into the world, that we may live by Him' (1 John iv. 8, 9).

22. What means '*God is merciful*'?

God is merciful means that He is disposed to avert all evil from His creatures, and therefore willingly pardons all truly penitent sinners.

'The mercy of God is upon all flesh' (Eccles. xviii. 12. Comp. Jon. iv. 11). 'As I live, saith the Lord God, I desire not the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way, and live' (Ez. xxxiii. 11).—Ex.: The Ninivites; Parable of the prodigal son (Luke xv.)

23. What means '*God is long-suffering*'?

God is long-suffering means that He often waits a long time before He punishes the sinner, in order to give him time for repentance.

'Thou overlookest the sins of men for the sake of repentance' (Wisd. xi. 24).—Ex.: Manasses (2 Paral. xxxiii.); Jerusalem (Matt. xxiii. 37); Parable of the barren fig-tree (Luke xiii.)

24. What should we do, since God is so good, so merciful, and so long-suffering?

We should, 1. Be thankful to God, and love Him with all our heart; 2. When we have sinned, we should with confidence beg pardon of Him; and 3. We should be good and merciful to our neighbors.

1. 'Give glory to the Lord, for He is good; for His mercy endureth for ever' (Ps. cvi. 1).—Ex.: Ingratitude of the Israelites in the desert punished. 2. 'I will arise and will go to my father' (Luke xv. 18). 3. 'Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful' (Luke vi. 36). Parable of the unmerciful servant (Matt. xviii.)

25. What means '*God is true*'?

God is true means that He reveals nothing but truth, because He can neither err nor lie.

'It is impossible for God to lie' (Hebr. vi. 18).

26. What means '*God is faithful*'?

God is faithful means that He surely keeps His promises, and executes what He threatens.

'And thou shalt know the Lord thy God, He is a strong and faithful God, keeping His covenant and mercy to them that love Him, and repaying forthwith them that hate Him, so as to destroy them' (Deut. vii. 9, 10).

27. What does the truth and faithfulness of God oblige us to do?

1. To believe most firmly in the Word of God, and steadfastly to trust in His promise; and 2. Always to speak the truth, and to keep the promise we have made.

1. 'Blessed are they that have not seen, and have believed' (John xx. 29).—Ex.: Abraham. 2. Punishment of Ananias and Saphira (Acts v.)

28. Can we also see God?

No; we cannot see God with corporeal eyes, because He is a Spirit.

29. How, then, have we come to the knowledge of God and His perfections, since we cannot see Him?

God has made Himself known to man in a natural and especially in a supernatural manner.

30. How has God made Himself known to man in a natural manner?

1. By the *visible world*, which He has created and continually governs; for nobody can reasonably think that the world has made itself, or that the regular and perfect order in it originated and subsists by itself.

Only 'the fool hath said in his heart, There is no God' (Ps. xiii. 1).

Therefore St. Paul says of the Gentiles that they are inexcusable, if they do not believe in God: 'For the invisible things of Him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made: His eternal power also, and Divinity' (Rom. i. 20). 'Nevertheless He left not Himself without testimony, doing good from Heaven, giving rains and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness' (Acts xiv. 16; comp. Wisdom 13).

2. By the *voice of conscience*, which admonishes us to dread an invisible avenger of sin, and to hope in a rewarder of virtue (Rom. ii. 15).

Conscience has not been made by man. Its action is often so painful that man would prefer, if he could, to be without it. It exists in us by the will of God, who made it an essential part of our human nature, in order that we might be taught by its voice.

31. How has God made Himself known to man in a supernatural manner?

By the *Revelation*, which He has given us by the Prophets, and last of all by His Son. (See p. 71, q. 5.)

'No man hath seen God at any time; the Only-begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him' (John i. 18).

32. Is there more than one God?

No, there is but one God.

'I am God, and there is no God beside, neither is there the like to me' (Isai. xlvi. 9).

33. Why do we say, '*I believe in God*,' and not only, '*I believe God*'?

Because we must not only believe that there is a God, and that all that He has said is true; but we must likewise give ourselves up to God with love and confidence.

Application. 'My son, give me thy heart' (Prov. xxiii. 26). Oh! give it to Him, the Eternal, the Infinitely Perfect, Rich, Good, and Faithful God, without delay, for ever and ever. God alone has a right

to possess it, and He alone has the power to render it happy through all eternity.

§ 2. *On the Three Divine Persons.*

'I believe in God the Father.'

34. Why do we say, 'I believe in God the *Father*'?

1. Because God is our invisible Father in Heaven; and 2. Because in God there is more than one Person, the first of whom is called the Father.

35. How many Persons are, then, in God?

There are three Persons in God: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

'Going therefore, teach ye all nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost' (Matt. xxviii. 19). 'There are three who give testimony in Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are One' (1 John v. 7).

36. Is each one of the three Persons God?

Yes, the Father is true God, the Son is true God, and the Holy Ghost is true God.

37. Are they not, then, three Gods?

No, the three Persons are but one God.

38. Why are the three Persons but one God?

Because all three Persons have one and the same indivisible nature and substance.

39. Is any one of these Persons older, or more powerful, than the others?

No; all three Persons are from eternity; all three are equally powerful, good, and perfect; because all three are but one God.

40. Is there, then, no distinction at all between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost?

As to the Persons they are distinct; but as to the substance they are one.

41. How are the three Divine Persons distinct from one another?

By this: that the Father is begotten of no one, nor

proceeds from any one; the Son is begotten of the Father; and the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father and the Son.

42. But if the Son is begotten of the Father, and the Holy Ghost proceeds from both, why, then, is none of the Divine Persons older than the others?

Because the Son is begotten from all eternity, and the Holy Ghost also proceeds from all eternity.

43. And if none of the Divine Persons is older or greater than the others, why, then, is the Father called the *first*, the Son the *second*, and the Holy Ghost the *third* Person?

They are so called, not to show any superiority, but the order in which the one proceeds from the other from all eternity.

44. What works are principally attributed to each of the three Divine Persons?

1. To the Father are attributed the works of omnipotence, and particularly the Creation; 2. To the Son, the works of wisdom, and particularly the Redemption; and 3. To the Holy Ghost, the works of love, and particularly the Sanctification; although these works are common to all three Persons.

The works of *Omnipotence* and Creation are particularly attributed to the Father, because He is the principle to which the two other Persons owe their eternal origin. The works of *Wisdom* to the Son, because the Father begets the Son by the knowledge of Himself, wherefore the Son is also called the essential '*Image*,' the eternal '*Word*' of the Father.

The works of *Love* are attributed to the Holy Ghost, because He proceeds from the mutual love of the Father and of the Son.

45. What do we call the mystery of one God in three Persons?

We call it the mystery of the *Most Blessed Trinity*.

46. Can we comprehend this mystery?

No; it is impossible that our weak and limited intellect, which cannot understand even created things ex-

cept imperfectly, should comprehend a mystery which is infinitely above all created things.

'Great art Thou in counsel, and incomprehensible in thought' (Jer. xxxii. 19). 'For we know in part. We see now through a glass in a dark manner' (1 Cor. xiii. 9, 12). However incomprehensible this mystery may be, yet it does not contradict any of the truths acknowledged by reason; for we do not say that God has one nature and three natures, but that, though He has but one nature, yet there are three Persons in Him. The Unity refers to the nature, and the Trinity to the Persons. (Comparison with the soul, which has memory, will, and understanding.)

47. Is the doctrine of the Most Holy Trinity also important to us?

Yes, it is most important; for it is the principal and fundamental doctrine of Christianity, insomuch that to reject it would be to deny the Christian Faith.

Application. That the grace of this saving Faith may not be withdrawn from you, never forget what thanks you owe to the Most Blessed Trinity for the inestimable benefits of your creation, redemption, and sanctification, and what you have solemnly promised to the same Trinity in the holy Sacrament of Baptism. (Feast of the Blessed Trinity.)

§ 3. *On the Creation and Government of the World.*

'Creator of Heaven and earth.'

48. Why is God called '*Creator of Heaven and earth*'?

Because God created—*i.e.*, made out of nothing—the whole world, the heavens and the earth, and all that is in them.

49. By what has God created the whole world?
By His almighty will.

'Thou hast created all things; and for Thy will they were and have been created' (Apoc. iv. 11).

50. Did God create the world because He needed it?

No; God is infinitely rich and happy in Himself, and needs nothing besides Himself.

'Thou art my God, for Thou hast no need of my goods' (Ps. xv. 2).

51. If God needs nothing besides Himself, why, then, did He create other beings?

He created them because He is infinitely good, and desired to impart His goodness also to other beings.

'We are, because God is good' (St. Augustine). 'God was not impelled to create by any other cause than a desire to communicate to creatures the riches of His bounty' (Cat. of the Counc. of Tr.)

52. Did, then, God create the world for His creatures?

No; God created the world for Himself—that is, for His glory—but, nevertheless, for the good of His creatures.

'The Lord hath made all things for Himself' (Prov. lxxvi. 4). 'And every one that calleth upon my name, I have created him for my glory, I have formed him, and made him' (Isai. xliii. 7).

53. What does God still do, that the world which He has created may not return into its original nothing?

He preserves and governs it.

54. How does God preserve the world?

By the same power of His will with which He created the world He causes it also to continue, in the manner He pleases, and as long as He pleases.

'How could anything endure, if Thou wouldst not?' (Wisd. xi. 26.)

55. How does God govern the world?

He takes care of all things,¹ orders all things, and, in His wisdom and goodness, directs all things to the end for which He has created the world.²

¹ 'God made the little and the great, and He hath equally care of all' (Wisd. vi. 8). 'But the very hairs of your head are all numbered' (Matt. x. 30). ² 'She [the wisdom of God] reacheth therefore from end to end mightily, and ordereth all things sweetly' (Wisd. viii. 1).—Ex.: Deliverance of the Jews through Esther.

56. What do we call this supreme care of God in preserving and governing the world?
His Divine Providence.

57. But if God orders and directs all things in the world, why, then, is there so much evil done? Does He will it?

No, God wills not the evil; but He permits it, 1. Because He has created man free; and 2. Because He knows also how to turn evil into good—*i.e.*, how to avail Himself of the evil in order to execute His eternal decrees.

Examples: The history of Joseph in Egypt: 'You thought evil against me; but God turned it into good' (Gen. i. 20). Thus God, the Almighty, turned even the murder of our Saviour by the Jews to the salvation of the world, and the impotence of the same Jews to the conversion of the heathens. And thus He still avails Himself every day of the designs of the wicked in order to glorify His Church; 'for there is no wisdom, there is no prudence, there is no counsel against the Lord' (Prov. xxi. 30).

58. And if God takes care of all things, why, then, are we subject to so many sufferings?

1. That the sinner may acknowledge the chastisement of God and mend his ways, and not perish for ever; and 2. That the just man may be more and more purified, and more abound in merits, and thus obtain a greater reward in Heaven.

1. Ex.: The brothers of Joseph: 'We deserve to suffer these things, because we have sinned against our brother' (Gen. xlii. 21). Manasses (2 Paral. xxxiii.); Jonas (Jonas ii.) 2. 'Gold and silver are tried in the fire, but acceptable men in the furnace of humiliation' (Eclus. ii. 5). 'Blessed are ye when they shall revile you, and persecute you, and speak all that is evil against you, untruly, for my sake. Be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in Heaven' (Matt. v. 11, 12).

59. But why does God often permit the wicked to prosper, whilst evil befalls the good?

1. Because He will not only deter the sinner from his evil ways by punishment, but will also win him by benefits; 2. Because He reserves to Himself to punish the wicked, and to reward the good, especially in eter-