

A Faith to Believe

The key to knowing ourselves, the church, the human race, the world, is in knowing God. False gods ensnare our hearts, and must be renounced; but the true God has revealed himself for us to know him, in creation, in redemption, and in sanctification, as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

BELONGING TO CHRIST (VI)

Renounce

Question. What did your Sponsors then for you?

Answer. They did promise and vow three things in my name: First, that I should renounce the devil and all his works, the pomps and vanity of this wicked world, and all the sinful lusts of the flesh.

MEMBERSHIP AND RENUNCIATION

The obligations of the baptismal covenant arise out of the very nature of the benefits it confers: they are the conditions upon which I realize and experience the benefit. If I am made "a member of Christ" and belong to him as a member belongs to a body, I cannot adhere to those powers that would divide me from him. I must renounce the three foes of man and God named in Scripture, "the devil and all his works, the pomps and vanity of this wicked world, and all the sinful lusts of the flesh". Robert Crouse gives the rationale: "We cannot serve two masters. Insofar as we are followers of the world - insofar as we look to the world around us as the standard and measure of our lives - we cannot be followers of God. Insofar as we are followers of the flesh - insofar as we measure our lives according to what is immediately pleasant and agreeable to us - we cannot be followers of God. Insofar as we are followers of the devil - that is to say, insofar as we put ourselves in the place of God as arbiters of good and evil - we cannot be followers of God"¹. When we follow them, we are not into righteousness but into sin, which is the Bible's word for separation or alienation from God. When we follow them, we become enemies to God.

THE WORLD, THE FLESH, AND THE DEVIL

One might only add that the powers named by the Scripture as the flesh, the world, and the devil, are to be identified not with creatures as made good by God but as estranged from him and become rivals with God for our love and loyalty. The flesh as the power opposed to God is not the body in itself, but human nature turned in upon itself and apart from God - flesh as if it had not need of Spirit. The world as a power opposed to God is not the world in itself, but human society turned in upon itself in rebellion against God - human society organized as if God did not exist. The devil is an angel who has turned in upon himself and made himself a false god. In practice there is little separation between these powers and much overlap - they are three aspects of rebellion against God, resistance to his will, rejection of his grace.

¹ Robert Crouse, Sermon for Trinity 18

LEGALISM AND LICENTIOUSNESS

Too often, when we think about sin we think of "sins of the flesh" - drinking, lewd dancing, sexual license. But when St. Paul lists "the works of the flesh" he mentions not only the obvious "sins of the flesh" - "adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, drunkenness, revellings" - but also "idolatry and witchcraft" - sins against true religion, plus "hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders" - sins against charity (Galatians 5:20, 21). The self-absorbed self-indulgent nature of the flesh expresses itself in the attempt to manipulate supernatural powers and in fractiousness towards others.

This brings to light an aspect of sin which is not apparent to many. Sinful adherence to the flesh, the world, and the devil may indeed manifest itself in overt rebellion against God's Law - but it can also be present, covertly, in apparently dutiful and responsible but in fact self-righteous persons. St. Paul's list of the "works of the flesh" indicate that the "upright" strict moralist may not be drinking or smoking or committing adultery, but in offences against religion, and charity he exhibits a carnal mind. Likewise, the self-righteous law-keeping elder brother in the parable of Jesus (Luke 15) is just as much separated from the Father's love, as much under the power of the world, the flesh, and the devil, as the rebellious law-breaking "prodigal" younger brother. By this parable, Jesus warned the law-keeping Pharisees and Scribes that their zeal to establish their own righteousness before God by doing the works of the law in reliance upon the flesh, was separating them from God - just as much as the more obvious law-breaking sins of the publicans and sinners with whom he kept company. Law-keeping legalism and law-breaking licence are both separate us from God and from one another.

As our true elder brother, however, Jesus did what the elder brother in the parable did not do. He came to seek and to save the lost - both the law-breaking publicans and sinners, and the law-keeping Pharisees and scribes. In his cross and resurrection Christ he overcame the powers (Colossians 2:15). As members of his body we are set free from bondage to them, delivered from self-righteous legalism and from rebellious lawlessness, and reconciled to God. To follow the promptings of these false gods is to reject the liberating and reconciling work of Christ on our behalf: to reject Christ is to be separated from God.

REPENTANCE

The renunciation of the world, the flesh, and the devil, implies the practice of repentance. All the gospels teach that the advent of Christ was prepared for by the preaching of repentance by John the Baptist: "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 3:2). And when Peter preaches the gospel, and the people are moved to faith, and ask him what shall we do, he says "repent, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38). Repentance is

thus the turning away from sin, and the renunciation of false gods, for the sake of embracing the grace of God in faith and living a new life of obedience.

The Prayer Book follows the teaching of Scripture in making the exercise of repentance the beginning point for the liturgy. In Morning and Evening Prayer, the service begins with a general Confession and Absolution; in Holy Communion, repentance is exercised in three different ways, each time as a preliminary step to the hearing of the Word of God and the administration of the Sacrament: the Ante-Communion begins with the Ten Commandments and the Kyrie eleison ("Lord, have mercy upon us"); the Communion proper with the General Confession and Absolution; the Consecration and delivery of elements with the Prayer of Humble Access.

DEAD TO SIN, ALIVE TO RIGHTEOUSNESS

Repentance has two aspects - the dying to sin, called "mortification", and the rising to righteousness, called "vivification". In Scripture, our union with Christ in his death and resurrection - the union effected by Baptism - entails and requires mortification and vivification (Romans 6:3-14, Ephesians 4:17ff, Colossians 3:5-10). It is compared to the "putting off" - like dirty clothes - "of the old man", that is, the old sinful nature, the old sinful habits - and "putting on the new man", as a new and clean clothes, the nature renewed by grace, and clothed in righteousness. This doctrine is replicated in the Prayer Book Order of Baptism, as the means by which we live out our sacramental union with Christ in his death and resurrection and anticipate our own physical death and resurrection to glory. Somewhat condensed in the 1928 Prayer Book, it runs like this in 1662:

We yield thee hearty thanks, most merciful Father, that it hath pleased thee to regenerate this infant with thy Holy Spirit, to receive him for thine own child by adoption, and to incorporate him into thy holy Church. And humbly we beseech thee to grant, that he, being dead to sin, and living unto righteousness, and being buried with Christ in his death, may crucify the old man, and utterly abolish the whole body of sin; and that, as he is made partaker in the death of thy Son, he may also be partaker of his resurrection; so that finally, with the residue of thy holy Church, he may be an inheritor of thine everlasting kingdom...

In an exhortation to the godparents, the priest says: "remember always, that Baptism doth represent unto us our profession; which is, to follow the example of our Saviour Christ, and to be made like unto him; that, as he died, so should we, who are baptized, die from sin, and rise again unto righteousness; continually mortifying all our evil and corrupt affections and daily proceeding in all virtue and godliness of living".

Perhaps this emphasis on mortification sounds "heavy"; but the Prayer Book and the Bible do not have in mind the extreme mortifications sometimes practised by the more zealous ascetics. John Keble's morning hymn outlines what might be involved: "The trivial round, the common task, / Will furnish all we ought to ask, / Room to deny ourselves, a road to take us daily nearer God". In the duties required by the Christian institutions of church, state, family, of education and economic life, there is plenty of opportunity to practice self-denial, to mortify pride, envy, anger, sloth, lust, gluttony, and avarice. To practice patience rather than resentment, humility rather than pride, generosity rather than envy, giving rather than spending, modest and licit pleasures of the table and bed rather than immoderate indulgences - these are mortifications indeed, and liberations from bondage to false gods. We die, so that we may rise again; we die, that we may live; and without that death, that crucifixion, there is no life. Why put a clean shirt on a dirty body? why put fresh paint on a rotting board?

SPIRITUAL WARFARE

When in Baptism we renounced the world, the flesh, and the devil, we were signed with the sign of the cross, in token that we should not be ashamed "manfully to fight under [Christ's] banner, against sin, the world, and the devil". This spiritual combat, celebrated in some well-loved hymns ("Onward Christian Soldiers", "Soldiers of Christ, Arise", "A Mighty Fortress"), is the point of the spiritual disciplines mentioned by Christ in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 6) - fasting, almsgiving, and prayer. Fasting and abstinence curb the pleasure-seeking impulses of the flesh, and bring it into conformity with the motions of the Spirit; prayer aligns our will with God's to curb the rebellious pride of the devil; almsgiving mortifies the deadly attraction of worldly riches as an end in themselves. We crucify and put to death our allegiance to the three foes of Christ, that in him we may know more fully the Father's love, and the Spirit's power.

Further Reading

- Matthew 4:1-11 *Christ is tempted and overcomes the Devil for us.*
- Ephesians 6:10 - 20 - *We War not against flesh and blood.*
- 1 John 2:15-17; Romans 12:1-2; 1 Corinthians 1, 2 - *the World and its wisdom*
- Luke 15 - *Two lost sons - License and legalism.*
- Colossians 3, Ephesians 4 - *Putting off the old man, and putting on the new.*
- Romans 6 - *dying to sin, rising to God.*
- Collect for Ash Wednesday, Prayer Book, p. 124 - *prayer for repentance*
- Collect for Easter Eve, Prayer Book, p. 161 - *prayer for mortification with Christ.*
- Collect for Trinity XVIII, Prayer Book, p. 214 - *prayer to withstand temptations and follow God.*

Questions for Review

- Why are the World, the Flesh, and the Devil enemies of God and man?
- Why is following them incompatible with following God?
- In Biblical terms, define the World, the Flesh, and the Devil
- What Biblical word describes their effect in us?
- What is legalism? what is license? how do they separate us from God?
- What is repentance?
- What are the two parts of repentance?
- How do we practice them ?

Questions for Discussion

- Renunciation is readiness to give up whatever holds us back from life with God: How important is renunciation in the Christian life?
- What culturally-approved practices and ideas are vehicles today for the world, the flesh, and the devil?
- Read Luke 15 and discuss: How are self-righteousness and rebellion different? How are they the same? Why is self-righteousness the more dangerous of the two? What was the elder brother's reaction to his younger brother's being lost and found? Looking at what Jesus is doing in 15:1-2, and what the shepherd and the woman do in 15:4-10, what would have been a more fitting way of responding?
- What forms of self-denial does our culture support, and what does it oppose? What practices of self-denial does the Christian religion enjoin?

BELONGING TO CHRIST (VII)

Believe

Catechist. Rehearse the Articles of thy Belief.

Answer. I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth: And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord: Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, Born of the Virgin Mary: Suffered under Pontius Pilate, Was crucified, dead, and buried: He descended into hell; The third day he rose again from the dead: He ascended into heaven, And sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty: From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost: The holy Catholic Church; The Communion of Saints: The Forgiveness of sins: The Resurrection of the body: And the Life everlasting. Amen.

BELIEF AND CREED

The second promise of Baptism is to “believe all the Articles of the Christian Faith”. Accordingly, after the Baptismal Covenant is concluded, and its obligations acknowledged with gratitude and prayerful resolve, the Christian is asked to "Rehearse the Articles of thy Belief" as they are set forth in the Apostles' Creed. (Note it is '*Thy* belief' - the Catechism is all about *ownership*.) The name, origins, nature, and authority of the Creed are not discussed, and its contents explained with almost dismaying brevity. (This is what was often called a Shorter Catechism, an instruction for beginners, which in due course would have been followed by a Middle and Larger Catechism, such as the catechisms of Heidelberg and of Alexander Nowell, which were widely used in the Church of England for this purpose.) But if the explanation is concise, it is also comprehensive: if we don't learn much about the trees (the individual Articles of faith) we do get to see the forest (the shape of the Articles as a whole).

What is a Creed? The word comes from the Latin “credo”, “I believe”, which is how true Creeds begin; though we also apply it to “statements of faith” like the Athanasian Creed which do not begin with the words “I believe”. The mere fact that Creeds exist, and have so prominent a place in the Christian religion, points to the special importance of Faith in the Christian religion – both the Faith we believe (its doctrine, or teaching), and the Faith by which we believe (the act of believing and trusting). There are two aspects to the importance of Faith - first, Faith and Revelation; and second, Faith, and Justification.

FAITH AND REVELATION

How do we know God? The Bible says that we can know naturally that God exists in infinite power and eternal wisdom, because he has revealed it in creation (Romans 1:19-20). When we look at the this empirically-detectible world, whether it be the intricacies of sub-atomic particles or the immensities of distant galaxies, or the miracle of life, or the miracle of intelligent life - we know these things did not create themselves. The there is a Creator "in whom we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28) can be known by all men.

Yet Scripture also says that men both have this knowledge, and turn away from it, denying what they know, and bringing themselves under God's judgment (there is more of this in Romans 1:19ff!). Moreover, though Scripture testifies that we can know there is a God, what we cannot know is that his Word was made flesh, that his Son was incarnate, and that he died and rose again for our salvation. This knowledge we can only have by supernatural revelation. Faith, believing and trusting in this Word of revelation, thus knows what is not in itself naturally knowable. Faith is a kind of seeing where we are blind. One day, it is true, our eyes will be open, and we will see God face to face, and in that vision we shall be blessed eternally (Matthew 5:8; 1 Corinthians 13:12; John 17:3), but already, by faith, "we know in part". In short, without faith, faith that believes the revelation of God in his Word made Flesh, Jesus Christ, there is no knowledge of Christ, and of the salvation he has wrought for us.

FAITH AND JUSTIFICATION

Though we sometimes refer to other religions as "faiths", faith in fact does not play nearly so prominent a role in them as in Christianity. There are indeed teachings to believe about God, about man, about reality; but very often the emphasis falls on things to do. In the old pagan religions of ancient Greece and Rome, in the ancient religions of the East, and in Judaism and Islam, it is easier to get by with a merely outward observance of code and cult. Not so in Christianity, even though Christians often try!

The reason for this is the central and defining claim of Christianity, that "a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ" (Galatians 2:16). It is not what we do, that 'justifies' or brings us into right relation with God, but what God has done for us in Christ, which we receive by means of faith alone. What we do also matters, but as effect and not cause of our justification. What we do matters, as the New Testament frequently insists (James 2; Galatians 5) but it matters as an expression of what we believe, not as a substitute for it. One might put this even more simply: the only thing you can give (in love, in good works) is what you have first received (by means of faith). "what hast thou that thou didst not receive?" (1 Corinthians 4:7).

Thus from the very beginning there has been an insistence, not just on what by our obedience we may do for God, but on faithful reception of what God has done for us. "Receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls" (James 1:21). Faith is an openness of mind and heart to God, a readiness to hear and receive his Word. It is the medium

by which God in his Word and Spirit works his good will in our souls. Faith is an act of the intellect, believing the truth which God has revealed, because he has revealed it, who can neither deceive nor be deceived; but it is not just an act of the intellect. Faith is not just believing certain truths *about* God; it is, as the Creed puts it, believing *in* God, trusting and relying on him, and being committed to him. Faith is not only a response to the fact that God is true and trustworthy – but also a decision that I will be true to God. It is *fidelity*. No wonder then that Thomas Aquinas says: “through faith the soul is united to God, and by it there is between the soul and God a union akin to marriage.”² “I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the LORD” (Hosea 2:20).

BELIEVING IN WHAT?

There is a popular bumper sticker that says “Believe”. To which one might well ask, believe what? Faith is not open-ended, a credulous acceptance of any claim that takes our fancy. Faith is a response to the truth and reality of God, as he has revealed himself to us in his Word, and by his Spirit. Likewise, people will sometimes say, “I believe in God”, to which one might reasonably ask, “what God is this that you believe in”? After all, the God they believe in may have no resemblance with the God of the Bible! This is where the Creeds have their value, as concise and authoritative statements of faith, that quickly map out the faith we believe, and allow Christians to recognize each other as sharing a common faith.

The Creed is an authoritative summary of the Christian Faith upon which we may rely. “Hold fast the form of sound words” urged St. Paul to Timothy, “which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 1:13), and readers have traced in Paul’s own writings formulae of a creed-like nature, “forms of sound words”, authoritative summaries of true faith received and handed on in the Church’s tradition:

Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.... (1 Corinthians 15:1-4)

The “credal impulse” to receive and hand on authoritative summaries of Christian teaching may thus be found in Scripture itself; yet the historic Creeds are not themselves Scripture, but summaries of Scriptural teaching, subordinate to Scripture itself. The Apostles’ Creed originated in the early Church (before the 4th century) as a confession of faith for use at baptism. Though not composed by the Apostles, it is rightly called the Apostles’ Creed, because it summarizes their doctrine as set forth in Scripture. On that basis it has long been received

² *The Catechetical Instructions of St. Thomas Aquinas*, New York City, 1939, p. 1.

as an authoritative statement of the Church's Rule of Faith. Two other Creeds have been widely received by Anglicans and other Christians - the 4th century Nicene Creed (read at Holy Communion), and the 5th century Athanasian Creed (once read at Morning Prayer but sadly omitted in the American Prayer Books). In general, these provide further detail than that which is found in the Apostles' Creed, and will be used as such in further chapters.

TRUE FAITH - AND TRUE UNITY

Each Creed grounds the personal faith of the individual Christian in that which is of ancient continuance and has been widely received in the Church as a true testimony to the faith of the apostles. The objectivity of the Creed thus guards against idiosyncrasy, sectarianism, or error into which merely private testimonies may fall. We make a personal confession of faith ("I believe...") but we do so in terms that are public, shared, and in common with the ancient church. The Creed thus becomes what in ancient times was called a "symbolum" - not exactly what we now call a "symbol", but rather something like a "touchstone", a means of recognizing one another as sharing a common faith, and speaking a common language of belief. Creeds do not answer all questions about the Faith - but they provide a sound basis for discussing them together. So the Faith of the Creed is not only the means of communion with God but also with his Church.

What is Church unity? In an age of fragmenting institutions, when denominations and "non-denominations" multiply, and the Anglican communion has splintered, we need to remember the true basis of Christian unity, is unity in the truth and love of Christ. The Prayer Books are remarkably clear about this spiritual unity, which institutions of church government are meant to express and foster. In the Prayer for the Church, we ask the Lord "to inspire continually the Universal Church with the spirit of truth, unity, and concord: And grant that all those who do confess thy holy Name may agree in the truth of thy holy Word, and live in unity and godly love" (p. 74). Likewise in the Prayer for All Sorts and Conditions of Men we pray "for thy holy Church universal; that it may be so guided and governed by thy good Spirit, that all who profess and call themselves Christians may be led into the way of truth, and hold the faith in unity of spirit, in the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life". We have a duty to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3); but that unity has its sure foundation in the truth (John 17:17-23).

Further Reading

- Romans 3:20 -4:25 – *Justified by faith*
- 1 Thess 1:2-10 - *St. Paul describes the effect of the gospel among the Thessalonians*
- 1 Cor 15:1-11 - *St. Paul recalls the gospel that he preached to the Corinthians*
- John 17 - *Sanctify them through thy truth... that they may all be one.*
- Article VIII, Prayer Book, p. 604 - *Of the Creeds.*

Questions for Review

- What are the two aspects of Faith?
- Why is Faith so prominent an element in the Christian religion?
- How does Faith relate to Revelation?
- How does Christianity differ from other religions in this respect?
- How does the author define Faith?
- How does Faith connect men to God?
- Why is the Apostles' Creed a reliable profession of Christian Faith?
- What other Creeds are received by Anglicans?
- What role does the Creed play in the fellowship of Christians with each other?

Questions for Discussion

- Many people think it does not really matter what we believe - what matters is how we live. What do you think is true about this opinion - and what is not true?
- What do you think is the difference between people who do good things because they believe, and people who do good things who do not believe?
- Does it really matter what we believe? What does it matter what we believe? What do you think it matters for our relation to God? What do you think it affects the way we live and treat one another?

BELONGING TO CHRIST VIII

The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost

Question. What dost thou chiefly learn in these Articles of thy Belief?

Answer. First, I learn to believe in God the Father, who hath made me, and all the world. Secondly, in God the Son, who hath redeemed me, and all mankind. Thirdly, in God the Holy Ghost, who sanctifieth me, and all the [elect³] people of God.

THE ONE AND THE THREE

It is one of the most astonishing discoveries of modern natural science that every elementary particle of matter exhibits the properties of particles, but also of waves - *simultaneously*. As Einstein said, "we have two contradictory pictures of reality: separately neither of them fully explains the phenomena of light, but together they do"⁴. Early Christians had a not dissimilar problem. On the one hand, they inherited from the prophets of Israel and retained a deep conviction that God is One Lord alone to be loved, worshipped, and served (Deuteronomy 6:4-5, 13). The "many gods" of the Gentiles were in fact nothing more than creatures, and thus false gods. Yet at the same time, in the humanity of Jesus Christ, and in the gift of the Holy Spirit, they had known God the Creator fully present and active also.

There was, and never has been, any question, of "three gods" in rivalry with one another, but of one God revealing himself in three distinct ways. Jesus is related to God as Son to the Father; and the Spirit is related to the Father and the Son as the Spirit of both, sent by both. The idea that in God there is both "one-ness" and "three-ness" we find throughout the New Testament. It is there when Jesus commissions his apostles to "baptize in the name [singular] of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost [plural]". It is there when St. Paul prays for the Corinthians that "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost" might be with them all evermore (2 Corinthians 13:14) - thus treating them with implicit equality. But it runs through longer discourses (like Matthew 11:25-30; John 14-17, or 1 Corinthians 12).

³ The 1928 Prayer Book timidly omits the word 'elect'; but the word is still found in Scripture and in the collect for All Saints, so we may restore it in good conscience.

⁴ quoted in Harrison, David (2000) "Complementarity and the Copenhagen Interpretation of Quantum Mechanics", in UPSCALE, University of Toronto. Retrieved 2008-06-21.

What to make of this? How can God be One and Three? As Einstein might have said, "we have two contradictory pictures of reality: separately neither of them fully explains *God*, but together they do". The early church developed a short-hand technical language to preserve this Biblical witness. In the 4th and 5th centuries, they settled on a way of speaking about God's oneness - as Substance (or essence, or nature); God's threeness - as Person. That God is One is Substance and Three in Person is the mystery of the Trinity in Unity, or that God is triune. It is usually referred to as the Trinity.

THE AUTHOR, THE STORY, THE CHARACTERS

It is the eternal Trinity, and his work in time and history, which the Catechism addresses. Brief as its explanation of the Creed is, the Catechism goes straight to the core of its teaching. First there is a teaching about the *author* of salvation history: God in himself - God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, the immanent or theological Trinity. Second, there is a teaching about the *history* this author shapes and governs, and into which, indeed, he enters by his Incarnation: his works of creation, redemption, and sanctification. Theologians call these works the divine "economy" - literally God's good house-keeping, his wise management of his plan of salvation. Third, we are taught to recognize ourselves as *characters* interacting with one another in this history: the Christian in relation to the triune God, to the divine economy, and also to the other *dramatis personae* - all creatures, all mankind, all the elect.

In the Creeds we acquire the first principles for making sense of who God is, what he has done, and therefore what we are in relation to him, and what we may expect from him. It is all too common for Christians to think of their religion in terms of things we ought to do - "good works", whether these be the churchly good works of the Middle Ages, or the worldly good works of our own time - but it is futile to think of the good works we ought to do, without first thinking of the good work which God has done as set forth in his Word for us to receive by faith. Unless we have received the love of God for us by means of faith, we cannot serve our neighbour in love; if we have received nothing from God, we have nothing to share.

THE THREE AND THE ONE

When we speak of the Triune God - the Trinity - we mean that God is both Three (in some sense) and One (in another). We may discard right away the notion that God is three and one in exactly the same sense - for this would be nonsense. Even God, with whom all things are possible, cannot be nonsense! We may well ask, however, in what respect is God three, and in what respect is he one? Now it is the easiest thing in the world to infer from the Creed that the persons of the Triune God are to be identified with the operations *ad extra* (outside himself), as if Father means no more than Creator, Son

nothing else than Redeemer, Spirit the same as Sanctifier: but this would be a mistake. Although each person of the Trinity has a special prominence in each of the three operations *ad extra*, this is not to the exclusion of the other two persons. The Father creates by means of his Word (the Son) and Spirit; the Son is sent by the Father and anointed by the Spirit for the work of redemption; the Spirit is sent by the Father and the Son for the work of sanctification; and the Spirit's work is precisely to incorporate us in the Son that we may know and love the Father. God is triune in himself, quite apart from the world he creates or the men he redeems or the elect he sanctifies; and his operations *ad extra* are designed to make us partakers indeed of the divine life. The Spirit we have received by faith in Jesus Christ is nothing else than "the Spirit of adoption", the Spirit of Sonship, "whereby we cry, Abba, Father - the Spirit bearing witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ" (Romans 8:15-17), heirs of everlasting life, "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4).

SUBSTANCE AND PERSON

So it is not enough to speak of the 'economic' trinity – God's threefold activity as Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. The "threeness" is not just God *ad extra*, in his operations in the world, it is found in God *in himself*. So theologians also speak of the 'immanent' or 'theological' Trinity, a trinity of persons in unity of substance. "Person" is the word used to speak of the "threeness" in God; "substance" (or "nature" or "essence") is the word used to speak of the "oneness" of God. The most succinct definition of the Trinity is that contained in the Proper Preface of Trinity Sunday, which gives praise to the Father, "who with thine only-begotten Son, and the Holy Ghost, art one God, one Lord, in Trinity of Persons and in Unity of Substance. For that which we believe of thy glory, O Father, the same we believe of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, without any difference of inequality". Whatever we may say of the Godhead of the Father – we must also say of the Godhead of the Son, and of the Spirit, for it is in fact one and the same Godhead, one divine nature and substance. The Athanasian Creed⁵ is insistent on this point: there is but one God, not three:

Now the Catholic Faith is this, /
that we worship one God in Trinity, and the Trinity in Unity;
4 Neither confusing the Persons, /
nor dividing the Substance.
5 For there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son, /

⁵ The Athanasian Creed, is neither a Creed nor written by Saint Athanasius, but rather a 5th century statement of the Catholic Faith, which is one of the three Credal standards of classical Anglicanism. It was omitted from the American Prayer Book in 1789 and the American Articles of Religion, but its teaching is assumed in the Prayer Book itself. The translation printed here is a somewhat modernized version found in the Canadian Prayer Book of 1958/62.

another of the Holy Ghost;
6 But the Godhead of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost is all one, /
the glory equal, the majesty co-eternal.
7 Such as the Father is, such is the Son, /
and such is the Holy Ghost;
8 The Father uncreated, the Son uncreated, the Holy Ghost uncreated;
9 The Father infinite, the Son infinite, the Holy Ghost infinite;
10 The Father eternal, the Son eternal, the Holy Ghost eternal;
11 And yet there are not three eternals, but one eternal;
12 As also there are not three uncreated, nor three infinites, /
but one infinite, and one uncreated.
13 So likewise the Father is almighty, the Son almighty, /
the Holy Ghost almighty;
14 And yet there are not three almighties, but one almighty.
15 So the Father is God, the Son God, the Holy Ghost God;
16 And yet there are not three Gods, / but one God.
17 So the Father is Lord, the Son Lord, / the Holy Ghost Lord;
18 And yet there are not three Lords, / but one Lord.
19 For like as we are compelled by the Christian verity /
to confess each Person by himself to be both God and Lord;
20 So are we forbidden by the Catholic Religion /
to speak of three Gods or three Lords.

THE DISTINCTION OF PERSONS

There is but one God – this is the faith of Israel and of the Church, and each of the persons is fully God. So what is the difference of the persons? The distinction of the consubstantial, co-eternal, co-equal Persons lies purely in their relations with each other as Father, as Son, and as Spirit:

21 The Father is made of none, / nor created, nor begotten.
22 The Son is of the Father alone; / not made, nor created, but begotten.
23 The Holy Ghost is of the Father and the Son; /
not made, nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding.
24 There is therefore one Father, not three Fathers; one Son, not three Sons; /
one Holy Ghost, not three Holy Ghosts.
25 And in this Trinity there is no before or after, / no greater or less;
26 But all three Persons are co-eternal together, / and co-equal.
27 So that in all ways, as is aforesaid, /
both the Trinity is to be worshipped in Unity, and the Unity in Trinity.
28 He therefore that would be saved, / let him thus think of the Trinity.

The distinction of persons lies in their relations - the manner in which each person shares in the one Godhead. The Father shares in the Godhead as its (paternal) origin and source; the Son shares in the Father's Godhead by way of *filiation* (sonship), and the Spirit shares in the Godhead of the Father and of the Son by way of (double) *procession* (the term used by Jesus of the Spirit in John 15:26). These distinctions and terms are indeed arid technicalities - but as a short-hand way of summarizing the Bible's own testimony to the nature of God, they are an indispensable instrument for precise and careful thinking about the work of God. It is because God is Triune, for instance, that the Father's giving the Son to die for our sins is not divine child abuse. God is not a family - nor is he a committee (a group of three gods) nor is he a pie (cut into three portions), but one God in three Persons.

TESTIMONIES TO THE TRINITY

All very mysterious of course! - and why should it be otherwise? God is infinite in power, wisdom, and goodness; it would be mere folly to pretend that the finite human mind can fully comprehend him. But we can know him as Triune, because he has revealed himself to faith, to be known as such. By Scriptural warrant, we are baptized "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" - one "name" for all, because one God; because three persons in equality. And our prayer is that "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost might "be with us all" evermore - and what is the grace of Jesus but the love of God? And what is the love of God but the fellowship of the Holy Ghost? These scriptural testimonies (which could be multiplied) correspond to the reality we experience in prayer, of God within us, the Holy Ghost, lifting us up through God beside us, God the Son, to God above us, God the Father. However dry these dogmatic bones may seem to be, the Trinity is the God who lives in Christians, it is the very shape and structure of Christian experience.

AN IMAGE OF THE TRINITY IN MAN

It is Saint Augustine who suggests one of the most helpful ways of thinking about the Trinity. Since Scripture says man is made in the image of God, he suggests that in the human soul or personality there is a ('psychological') image of the Trinity. There are three distinct activities in the soul - *memoria*, *intellectus*, *voluntas*, or memory, reason, and will; remembering, knowing, and loving - each distinct, each related to each other, yet also one. The Father therefore is in a sense the *memoria Dei*, the ground of knowledge and love; the Son, who is the Word of God, is the *intellectus Dei*, God's knowing himself; the Spirit, "which is given unto us", and by whom "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts" (Romans 5:5), is in a sense the *voluntas Dei*, God's willing or loving himself. Our remembering, knowing and loving God is therefore a participation by grace in God's own memory, knowledge of and delight in his own infinite and eternal being. As we grow in remembrance, knowledge, and love of God, so we are remade, reformed, renewed in the image and likeness of God.

MAN'S LIFE IN THE TRINITY

There is of course much more to be said: but the Catechism's practical perspective is one that we can already take to heart: it is as we come to know the Triune God in his threefold economy of salvation, that we come to know ourselves, and are able to think rationally and realistically about the direction of our lives. We must learn to think of ourselves in terms of the triune God and his works of creation, redemption, and sanctification. Here is how George Herbert does so, in "Trinity Sunday":

Lord, who hast form'd me out of mud,
And hast redeem'd me through thy blood,
And sanctif'd me to do good;

Purge all my sins done heretofore:
For I confess my heavy score,
And I will strive to sin no more.

Enrich my heart, mouth, hands in me,
With faith, with hope, with charity;
That I may run, rise, rest with thee.

In faith we run the race that is set before us by God the Father, "who hath made me, and all the world". In hope we rise from death to life, by the grace of God the Son, "who hath redeemed me, and all mankind". In charity we attain our rest by God the Holy Ghost, "who sanctifieth me, and all the elect people of God".

Further Reading

- Matthew 28:18-19 – *The Great Commission*
- 2 Corinthians 13:14 – *The Grace*
- John 14 - *the Holy Ghost, which the Father will send in my Name.*
- Article I, Prayer Book, p. 603 - *Of Faith in the Holy Trinity.*
- Collect for Trinity Sunday, Prayer Book, p. 186

Questions for Review

- What is the relation of believing and doing in the Christian life?
- What term is used for the mysterious being of the God of the Bible?
- What is the difference between God and the salvation which he manages? What is similar?
- What unites the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost? (What do they share?)

- What distinguishes them?
- What technical term does the Nicene Creed use to describe this "one-ness"?
- What technical term does the Athanasian Creed use to describe the "three-ness"?
- What scriptural basis is there for this doctrine of God?
- What experiential basis in the Christian life is there for this doctrine of God?
- What is the psychological image of the Trinity developed by Saint Augustine? What does it say about God? What does it say about men?
- What does it say about the importance of memory, knowledge, and love of God?

Questions for Discussion

- The doctrine of the Trinity is not easy to grasp, and often makes use of various technicalities. Why do you think it is important for Christians to believe and know it?
- Read Genesis 1:1-2:3, John 14, or Acts 2, or Galatians 4:1-7 and identify the activity of the three persons in each passage.
- "It is because God is Triune, for instance, that the Father's giving the Son to die for our sins is not divine child abuse. God is not a family – nor is he a committee (a group of three gods) nor is he a pie (cut into three portions), but one God in three Persons". Why do you think this is so?

BELONGING TO CHRIST IX

God the Father

Catechist. Rehearse the Articles of thy Belief.

Answer. I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth...

Question. What dost thou chiefly learn in these Articles of thy Belief?

Answer. First, I learn to believe in God the Father, who hath made me, and all the world.

CREATOR

The Creed teaches us to “believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth” – a infinite power of fatherly goodness which is the source and origin of all things from beyond all things. Pagan myths often taught how the world gave birth to the gods, and so the gods are “super-creatures”, very powerful beings but within the world, what the Bible calls “principalities and powers” - angels, or demons. The central confession of Israel is that God made the world, and therefore God is not a creature, nor even a super-creature, but something utterly other than a creature, their Creator.

A carpenter needs wood and a sculptor needs stone, but God created all things out of nothing, by the wisdom and power of his Word and Spirit (Genesis 1:1-2:3; cf. Isaiah 64:8; Acts 4:24; 1 Corinthians 8:6). The doctrine of creation is not an explanation of *how* God made the world, but *that* he did: it answers the question - and what other answer could there be? - why is there anything at all, instead of nothing? It affirms that everything that exists, is dependent for its existence at every point upon God's power as Creator and Preserver.

As the very ground of being, all creatures depend on him but there is no need of his which they could supply. It is of sheer goodness that he makes the world and everything in it, sheer goodness that he wills there to be creatures, and he made everything “good” and all together “very good”, without defect or flaw (Genesis 1:4, 10, et al., 31). When evil enters into the world, it is as a privation or corruption of the good; when sin enters the world, it is (as Genesis 3 shows us) through a perversion of the will, an abuse of rational freedom God gave angels and men.

EVOLUTION AND CREATION

In our time, it is often supposed - by some scientists, by some atheists, and by some Christians - that the religious doctrine of Creation is incompatible with the scientific doctrine of Evolution. What is not so often recognized is that other scientists, and other Christians

(including the Roman Catholic church!), consider them entirely compatible. It all depends, of course, on what you mean by them.

If you suppose that the Bible is a cosmological treatise, a kind of handbook of natural science, then you may conclude that there is no place at all for the origin and development of living species by natural selection (the core idea of evolution). But is that what the Bible is? The Bible itself testifies that the scriptures were designed to make us "wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 3:15). Exactly how does natural science contribute to saving faith?

And if you suppose that evolution has a convincing answer for the question of why there is anything at all, rather than nothing, you will think that there is no place for the doctrine of a God the Creator. But does evolution have any such answer? Even a great Broadway lyricist knew better than that - although it was first argued by the Greek philosopher Parmenides: "Nothing comes from nothing, nothing ever could..." Evolution may have lots to say about what happened after there was something - but it cannot tell us why there is something, and not anything at all.

In truth, the Christian doctrine of Creation is one of the hidden historical and logical presuppositions of modern natural science, and Christians at least ought to recognize and rejoice in this dependence. The Christian religion and natural science have much to talk about with each other to the advantage of both. Unfortunately, too often the debate is carried on by individuals on each side who seem to have little knowledge either of the position they attack or even of the position they defend. Instead of a vigorous debate clarifying the issues, we get the argument of screech against scream.

MAN THE CREATURE

The doctrine of Creation is also a doctrine of Man. In the well-ordered, coherent world that God made, man, both male and female, has a special authority and vocation: made in the image and likeness of God, to exercise dominion over the creatures, as shepherds and stewards of his creation, in obedience to his Word (Genesis 1:26-28; 2:4-25; Psalm 8). And there is a hint, just a hint, that man has a unique role to play in the unfolding of God's design for his world. For if each thing is made "good", and all things are made "very good", there is a hint that the "best" is yet to come, a sharing in the Sabbath rest of God himself (2:2-3). Man is created in pilgrimage, to use all creatures for the sake of God's glory. "Lord, thou hast made us for thyself", says St. Augustine, "and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in thee". It is this ordering of man to his eternal good, this "original righteousness", which is lost in Adam's fall. Sinful men "changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator" (Romans 1:25).

THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD

In what sense is God "Father"? This does have some reference to his work as Creator, as the fatherly origin that stands before and beyond all creatures. As St. Paul says, "we are also his offspring" (Acts 17:28). And it is in this sense of the Father as Creator that the ancient

canticle *Te Deum Laudamus* begins its praises: "All the earth doth worship thee, the Father everlasting". Yet in Scripture and in theology, the Fatherhood of God is not primarily found in his relation to the creatures, but in his relation to his Son (as St. John's gospel constantly testifies)– and to those who share his Sonship, his chosen people (Exodus 4:22-23; Galatians 4:4-7). It is in and through his fatherly love for his "beloved Son", that we know God as *our* Father. And so we cannot rightly grasp this first Article of the Faith without going on to consider the second.

But, to "believe in God the Father", as the one who "has made me and all the world": this "is a short way of saying that I believe that there is no existence ... which has any other origin than the will of God. It is to say that all things are embraced by a paternal providence which sustains, and guides, and governs; that nothing, whether visible or invisible, can fall outside that providence"⁶. As an old hymn puts it, "This is my Father's world/Oh let me ne'er forget/That though the wrong seem oft so strong/God is the ruler yet". The world is not a lottery or a struggle of blind forces; I am neither pawn nor victim of arbitrary powers; the power that rules everything - both good and evil, both great and small - is the power of fatherly love. And therefore, "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28); and even evil itself is in his hands an instrument of his good purpose: "ye thought evil against me" says Joseph to his brothers, who had sold him into slavery, "but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive" (Genesis 50:19). Entrusting myself to him, I am free to live without fear, for "our help standeth in the name of the Lord, who hath made heaven and earth" (Psalm 124:7). Acknowledging my entire dependence upon him for any good I have, I owe him my thanks, praise, and obedience.

THE ONLY SAVIOUR

We have seen that God is not the author of evil, which originates in a perversion of the will and is the corruption of his good creatures. He is powerful to preserve the world from destruction, and by his almighty all-wise providence works in and through evil to accomplish his own good purposes for creation. Yet we must say something further: that in the face of the ruin that threatens the world by man's rebellion against the Creator, God in his love for the world goes to war against the powers that oppress, corrupt, and seek its ruin, and by his wisdom and power comes to deliver, rescue, restore, and perfect the world. We see God as the Savior over and over again in the history of his people, archetypically in the exodus from Egypt, and in the return from exile in Babylon. That is to say, once again, that is in and through his Son he sent into the world to be its redeemer, that we know God as the Saviour of the world

⁶ R. D. Crouse: "The Creeds as the Sufficient Statement of the Christian Faith", in *Rebuilding the House of God: the Lambeth Quadrilateral of 1888* (Report of the 1987 Theological Conferences held at Charlottetown PEI, and Rosemont, Pennsylvania) St. Peter Publications, Charlottetown, n.d., p. 46

he made. And so, once again, we cannot rightly grasp this first Article of the Faith without going on to consider the second.

For Further Reading

- Genesis 1:1-2:3 – *God the Creator and Man as his chief Creature.*
- Isaiah 43 – *Israel's only Savior*
- Psalms 95, 103, 146-150 – *Praises of God as Creator*
- Acts 14:8-18 *Paul's testimony to the Creator at Lystra.*
- *Venite, exultemus Domino*, Prayer Book, p. 9; *Benedicite* pp. 11-13 - *praise of God as Creator.*

Questions for Review

- How sets apart the Bible's account of God from those of pagan myths?
- Does God depend on anything else for creation?
- What question does faith in the Creator answer? What questions does it not answer?
- Why does God create?
- Is the world he created defective? does it include evil?
- What is the cause of evil?
- What is providence?
- For God to stand up for his creation in the face of evil, what must he do?

Questions for Discussion

- There have been many fierce arguments between "evolutionists" and "creationists". Is evolution compatible with the doctrine of creation? Is "creationism" the same as belief in God the Creator?

BELONGING TO CHRIST (X)

God the Son

And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord: Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, Born of the Virgin Mary: Suffered under Pontius Pilate, Was crucified, dead, and buried: He descended into hell; The third day he rose again from the dead: He ascended into heaven, And sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty: From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

Question. What dost thou chiefly learn in these Articles of thy Belief?

Answer. Secondly, [I learn to believe] in God the Son, who hath redeemed me, and all mankind.

JESUS - THE SAVIOUR?

The testimony of the prophets is unanimous. Only God can create, only God can save and redeem. "I am the Lord: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to grave images" (Isaiah 42:8); "there is no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me. Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else" (Isaiah 46:2, 22). Yet the New Testament invites us to look to Jesus as the Savior, and to call upon him for salvation (Romans 10:13 *et alia*). The psalmist urges Israel to "trust in the Lord: for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption; And he shall redeem Israel from all his sins" (Psalm 130:7, 8).

Yet St. Matthew testifies that Mary's Son was named Jesus (the Greek form of Joshua, or "saviour"), "because he shall save his people from their sins". Only God saves; but salvation comes through Jesus: therefore Jesus is God. Faith in God is faith not only in the Father, but also in the incarnate Son.

JESUS, THE CHRIST, SON AND LORD.

Father in God the Father, creaturely existence, is only the first aspect of what I am. The Creed also teaches me to believe "in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord". He is named Jesus (the Greek form of the name Joshua) which means "God saves"; he bears the title Christ (the Greek form of the word Messiah, Anointed One), because he is anointed by the Spirit for a threefold ministry as prophet (revealing God's will and teaching his word), priest (offering himself in sacrifice in intercession for the people), and king (given all authority in heaven and

earth, and ruling them by his Spirit). He is God's "only Son", standing in unique relation to him; and "our Lord", because he stands in unique relation to men.

THE ONLY SON

We turn to the Nicene Creed to find a fuller account of his unique relation to God: "Begotten of his Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, Very God of very God; Begotten, not made; Being of one substance with the Father; By whom all things were made". Which is to say that the Son of God is God the Son, and in the great divide of Creator and creatures, stands on the side of the Creator. Whatever we say of the glory of the Father, we must also say of the glory of the Son, yet without affirming two Gods, for the Son is "of one substance with the Father" - there is but one and same divine substance, nature, or essence⁷.

OUR LORD

We turn to the Nicene Creed for a fuller account of his unique relation to men: "Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, And was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, And was made man." As God he is of course the Lord, but he is our Lord, because he came for our salvation, and for our salvation he was made man. The Athanasian Creed is even more explicit about the nature of the Incarnation:

30 Now the right Faith is that we believe and confess /
that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is both God and Man.
31 He is God, of the Substance of the Father,
begotten before the worlds; /
and he is Man, of the Substance of his Mother, born in the world;
32 Perfect God; / perfect Man,
of reasoning soul and human flesh subsisting;
33 Equal to the Father as touching his Godhead; /
less than the Father as touching his Manhood.
34 Who although he be God and Man, /
yet he is not two, but is one Christ;
35 One, however, not by conversion of Godhead into flesh, /
but by taking of Manhood into God;
36 One altogether; / not by confusion of Substance,
but by unity of Person.
37 For as reasoning soul and flesh is one man,
so God and Man is one Christ....

Jesus Christ is both God and Man, in the integrity of both natures, without confusion or separation. He is not a blend of both, but two natures in one person, true God and true Man

⁷ John 1:1-18; Hebrews 1; John 20:28 are among numerous scriptural testimonies to Christ's full deity.

with men. As true or perfect man, he is more fully human than any other man before the operation of grace, conceived and born “without spot of sin, to make us clean from all sin” (Proper Preface for Christmas)⁸.

GOD IN THE WORLD HE MADE

The sign of his Incarnation, his taking on human nature and advent in the flesh, is the next article of the Creed: he was “conceived by the Holy Ghost, Born of the Virgin Mary”. “Therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee” says the angel to Mary, “shall be called the Son of God” (Luke 1:35). The Creed ignores his preaching and miracles, and passes directly from his birth to the cross. It tells the story of the Incarnate Son once condemned of sinners, but now vindicated by God, elevated, reigning, and next to be manifested in glory as the judge of what is true and false, real and unreal, approved or condemned by God. And it holds out to us the hope of redemption: because he suffers and accomplishes all these things in the humanity he assumed from Mary, he suffers and accomplishes all these things on our behalf, as our representative. In his condemnation therefore our sin is condemned, in his vindication we are raised from death, by his elevation we are empowered with his Spirit, in his kingdom we reign with him, and in his glory we shall also be manifested with him.

REDEMPTION BY HIS BLOOD

The Catechism sums up the entire paragraph, as teaching me “to believe in God the Son, who redeemed me and all mankind”. Here the word “redeem” is being used in its proper sense - ‘to liberate persons or things from bondage or alienation, by the payment of a price’. “Ye were redeemed not with corruptible things, as silver and gold ... but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Peter 1:18, 19). The Creed has the entirety of Christ's work in view - from his advent in the flesh to his coming again in judgment - but it all turns on what he accomplished so decisively at the cross, where he took upon himself responsibility for the sins of the whole world.

If Christ has “redeemed me and all mankind” there is no man who does not need redemption (from sin, death, and the devil); and no man that Christ cannot redeem. Because of the price that Christ has paid - “a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world” - neither sin, nor death, nor the hell, can prevent my return to God. To believe in him is to experience the redemption that he wrought – to be raised from the death of sin, elevated in the life of Spirit, manifested with him in glory. I am free to live without fear; and to worship and serve him as my Lord.

Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were an offering far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,

⁸ Hebrews 4:15, John 8:46

Demands my soul, my life, my all.

The question remains, how does I share in the redemption accomplished by Christ? How does what he accomplished in the past, or will accomplish in the future, become present to me here and how? How does what he accomplished in himself, become a reality in me? For this we must turn to the final paragraph, concerning belief in God the Holy Ghost.

Further Reading

- John 1:1-18 – *The Incarnation of God the Son.*
- Philippians 2:5-11 - *The humbling and exaltation of the Son.*
- 1 Peter 3:18-22– *The suffering, death, resurrection, and exaltation of Christ*
- 1 Timothy 3:16 – *The great mystery of godliness.*
- Colossians 1:3-29 - *The supremacy of Christ*
- Colossians 3:1-4 – *Risen with Christ, glorified with Christ.*
- Articles II, III, IV, Prayer Book p. 603 - *Of the Word or Son of God, which was made very Man; Of the going down of Christ into Hell; Of the Resurrection of Christ.*
- Collect for Easter Day, Prayer Book p. 165

Questions for Review

- What is the meaning of the name "Jesus" and the title "Christ"?
- According to the Nicene Creed, what is his relation to God the Father? How is he the same, how different?
- According to the Nicene Creed, what is his relation to Man? How is he the same, how different?
- On what terms does the Athanasian Creed affirm that Jesus is both God and Man?
- How is the work of Christ summed up?
- What is the meaning of the word "redeem"?

Questions for Discussion

- How would you answer the question, "Who is Jesus Christ"? What evidence would you offer to support your answer?
- What difference would it make if Jesus were not fully God? Were not fully human?
- In what sense do Jews, Christians, and Muslims worship the same God? In what sense do they not?
- What would happen to Christianity if we took out the resurrection, the virgin birth, and the other miracles of Jesus? What difference do they make?

Martin Luther on “the Wedding Ring of Faith”

From *The Freedom of a Christian*

Martin Luther's account of faith in Christ the Redeemer has had a profound impact on Anglican Christianity.

The third incomparable grace of faith is this, that it unites the soul to Christ, as the wife to the husband; by which mystery, as the Apostle teaches, Christ and the soul are made one flesh. Now if they are one flesh, and if a true marriage-- [112] nay, by far the most perfect of all marriages--is accomplished between them (for human marriages are but feeble types of this one great marriage), then it follows that all they have becomes theirs in common, as well good things as evil things; so that whatsoever Christ possesses, that the believing soul may take to itself and boast of as its own, and whatever belongs to the soul, that Christ claims as his. If we compare these possessions, we shall see how inestimable is the gain. Christ is full of grace, life, and salvation; the soul is full of sin, death, and condemnation. Let faith step in, and then sin, death, and hell will belong to Christ, and grace, life, and salvation to the soul. For, if he is a husband, he must needs take to himself that which is his wife's, and, at the same time, impart to his wife that which is his. For, in giving her his own body and himself, how can he but give her all that is his? And, in taking to himself the body of his wife, how can he but take to himself all that is hers? In this is displayed the delightful sight, not only of communion, but of a prosperous warfare, of victory, salvation, and redemption. For since Christ is God and man, and is such a person as neither has sinned, nor dies, nor is condemned,--nay, cannot sin, die, or be condemned; and since his righteousness, life, and salvation are invincible, eternal, and almighty; when, I say, such a person, by the wedding-ring of faith, takes a share in the sins, death, and hell of his wife, nay, makes them his own, and deals with them no otherwise than as if they were his, and as if he himself had sinned; and when he suffers, dies, and descends to hell, that he may overcome all things, since sin, death, and hell cannot swallow him up, they must needs be swallowed up by him in stupendous conflict. For his righteousness rises above the sins of all men; his life is more powerful than all death; his salvation is more unconquerable than all hell. Thus the believing soul, by the pledge of its faith in Christ, becomes free from all sin, fearless of death, safe from hell, and endowed with the eternal righteousness, life, and salvation of its husband Christ. Thus he presents to himself a glorious bride, without spot or wrinkle, cleansing her with the washing of water by the word; that is, by faith in the word of life, righteousness, and salvation. Thus he betrothes her unto [113] himself "in faithfulness, in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies." (Hosea ii. 19, 20.) Who then can value highly enough these royal nuptials? Who can comprehend the riches of the glory of this grace Christ, that rich and pious husband, takes as a wife a needy and impious harlot, redeeming her from all her evils, and supplying her with all his good things. It is

impossible now that her sins should destroy her, since they have been laid upon Christ and swallowed up in Him, and since she has in her husband Christ a righteousness which she may claim as her own, and which she can set up with confidence against all her sins, against death and hell, saying: "If I have sinned, my Christ, in whom I believe, has not sinned; all mine is His, and all His is mine;" as it is written, "My beloved is mine, and I am his. (Cant. ii. 16.) This is what Paul says: "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ;" victory over sin and death, as he says: "The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law." (I Cor. xv. 56, 57.) From all this you will again understand, why so much importance is attributed to faith, so that it alone can fulfil the law, and justify without any works.

BELONGING TO CHRIST XI

God the Holy Ghost

I believe in the Holy Ghost: The holy Catholic Church; The Communion of Saints: The Forgiveness of sins: The Resurrection of the body: And the Life everlasting. Amen.

Question. What dost thou chiefly learn in these Articles of thy Belief?
Answer. Thirdly, in God the Holy Ghost, who sanctifieth me, and all the people of God.

FOR US AND IN US

What Christ accomplished, in his death, resurrection, and ascension, he accomplished in his perfect humanity and for us. In him, we have already died, risen, and ascended. In him, nothing stands between me and the Father, nothing hinders my return to God. No longer the slaves of blind or hostile powers, in him we are free to live for God, set apart and consecrated to serve him in new lives of righteousness and holiness, which is the beginning of eternal life in us. Yet how are we *in him*? How does what he accomplished for us, as our representative, become accomplished in us, by participation in him?

This is the work of the Holy Ghost. For the realization of this freedom which Christ has won for us, we are entirely dependent upon God the Holy Ghost, who is called "Holy" because he "sanctifies" - makes holy - "me and all the elect people of God". It is the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit to call by the gospel those whom God has chosen for himself, "the elect people of God", to gather them into "the Holy Catholic Church", to knit them together in "the Communion of Saints", and in that fellowship to impart to them "the Forgiveness of Sins, the Resurrection of the Body, and Life Everlasting". The mission of the Holy Ghost is to apply to the elect all that Christ has accomplished in his redemption of mankind. What Christ has done *for* us, the Holy Ghost accomplishes *in* us.

MAKING THE PAST PRESENT

Oliver O' Donovan puts it this way "How... can these events in the past and future [Christ's death, resurrection, ascension, coming again] be *present* realities to us?" An answer is suggested in John 16:5-7, in the words of Jesus to his disciples at the Last Supper: "But now I go my way to him that sent me; and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou? But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart. Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the

Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.” O’ Donovan concludes, “The Holy Spirit is the gift of God for the time of Christ’s absence. He makes the reality of Christ’s triumph present to us, and us to it; he connects the “there and then” with the “here and now”⁹.

MAKING THE OUTWARD INWARD

Then there is also St. Paul’s prayer, “unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, ... that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith” (Ephesians 3:16). The Spirit is the means by which Christ becomes inwardly present in us, to transform us our inward being. We are justified by faith, and a faith that works in hope and charity – but where does faith come from? Where do hope and charity come from? O’ Donovan again: For me “to believe in what God has done and respond to it, requires a miracle of God. There can never be a point in my salvation at which God simply stops and leaves it to me. The ... act of belief in Christ needs to be evoked in us by God himself. That is what the Holy Spirit does. He is God within me, prompting me to believe in God manifest in Christ, enabling me to approach God the Father”¹⁰. “Ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father” (Romans 8:15). And this is why, of course, the Nicene Creed affirms that the Holy Ghost “with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified”. What is true of the Father’s glory, and of the Son’s, must also be true of the Holy Ghost’s¹¹.

Austin Farrer puts it this way: "No Christian wants to say, ' I respond to Christ, and *then* the Holy Ghost supports me.' He therefore compares conversion to the "capture" or liberation "of a town, by the joint effort of an assault from without, and a fifth column within. Apart from the presence without, the fifth column would be held down. Apart from the action of the column, the assault would not breach the defences"¹². Elsewhere he makes a similar point: "it is not so much the word of Jesus knocking at the mind's door that secures his admittance; it is the God within [the Holy Ghost] drawing the bolts with invisible fingers"¹³.

CONVICING AND CONVINCING

That is why it is the work of the Holy Ghost to “reprove [convict] the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on me; of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged” (John 16:8-11). That is why he is sent, Jesus says to his disciples, “to guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he

⁹ Oliver O’ Donovan: *On the Thirty Nine Articles*, p. 43.

¹⁰ Ibid pp 43-44.

¹¹ Scripture’s testimony to the deity of the Spirit may be found in passages such as Matthew 28:18; 2 Corinthians 13:14; and Acts 5:3 compared with 5:4.

¹² Austin Farrer, *Saving Belief* (1965), p. 125.

¹³ Austin Farrer, *The Crown of the Year* (1952), p. 32.

speak: and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you” (John 16:12-16). The Spirit bears witness to Christ in hearts and minds, as the apostles bear witness in ears and eyes (John 15:26, 27).

We see that convicting power at work on the day of Pentecost. As Peter proclaims the exaltation of Christ, the listening men “were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation” (Acts 2:37-40).

Thus the Holy Ghost imparts to us the gifts of faith, hope, and charity, empowering us to believe, trust, and love “No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost” (1 Corinthians 12:3). “The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us” (Romans 5:5). And where the Spirit is given to begin our spiritual life, he gives himself more to bring that life to maturity, in grace upon grace, in growing likeness to Christ: “we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Corinthians 3:18).

GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT

The greatest gifts of the Spirit are indeed faith, hope, and charity, by which the Father and the Son make themselves present to us, and abide in us, by which we are united to them. But there are other gifts which the Spirit gives all Christians, for their sanctification in all virtue (Isaiah 11:2), and to empower and equip them for ministry and service in the common good (representative but not exhaustive lists of such gifts are found in Romans 12:6-21, 1 Corinthians 12:1-12, Ephesians 4:7-16). In the New Testament era, these could be supernatural in character - speaking in tongues, working miracles, prophecy, and so on. It is disputed among Christians whether these belong chiefly or exclusively, to the apostolic era of divine revelation (of which they were indeed confirming signs, Mark 16:17-20 and Hebrews 2:4), or whether they continue afterwards in the age of the church's proclamation. Anglicans and other reformed Christians tend to the former view, Pentecostals, Roman Catholics, and Eastern Orthodox to the latter (albeit in rather different ways!). Regardless, we may agree, that where the Lord calls his people to serve him, he also equips them by his Spirit to do so.

COMFORT OF THE PARACLETE

One further point. In the last supper discourses in St. John's gospel, Jesus refers to the Holy Ghost as “another Paraclete” (replacing himself), and then as “the Paraclete”. This word, traditionally translated Comforter (because of the “comfort” or

encouragement, that he provides), literally means someone who is “called alongside” to help us. In other words, when he takes possession of us, he does not seize control to run our lives without consulting us. By his influence he illuminates our minds to perceive the truth, enkindles our wills to love the good, and tempers our passions in subjection to mind and will, but this is empowerment, not enslavement. It is by the Spirit that we are incorporated in the Son, and are empowered to know, love, serve, and enjoy the Father. Well may we make our own this ancient hymn to the Holy Ghost, called *Veni Creator*.

COME, Holy Ghost, our souls inspire,
And lighten with celestial fire.
Thou the anointing Spirit art,
Who dost thy sevenfold gifts impart.

Thy blessed unction from above,
Is comfort, life, and fire of love.
Enable with perpetual light
The dulness of our blinded sight.

Anoint and cheer our soiled face
With the abundance of thy grace.
Keep far our foes, give peace at home;
Where thou art guide, no ill can come.

Teach us to know the Father, Son,
And thee, of both, to be but One;
That, through the ages all along,
This may be our endless song:
Praise to thy eternal merit,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Further Reading

- Numbers 11:16-17, 24-29 *Would God that the Lord would his Spirit upon all his people!*
- Joel 2:28-end *I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh.*
- John 14:15-end *I will give you another Comforter, even the Spirit of truth.*
- John 16:5-15 *He shall guide you into all truth, he shall glorify me.*
- Acts 2 *They were all filled with the Holy Ghost.*
- Acts 10:19-48 *While he yet spake, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word.*
- I Corinthians 12 *No man can say Jesus is Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.*
- Romans 8 *As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.*
- Article V, Prayer Book p. 603 - *Of the Holy Spirit*

- Collect for Quinquagesima, Prayer Book, p. 122 - *Prayer for Spirit's gift of charity*
- Collect for Whitsunday, Prayer Book p.180 - *prayer for Spirit's wisdom and comfort*
- Collect for Trinity XIX, Prayer Book, p. 215 - *Prayer for Spirit's guidance*
- Collect for Purity, Prayer Book, p. 67 - *prayer for Spirit's inspiration to worship God worthily.*
- Collect for Saint Barnabas the Apostle, Prayer book p. 240 - *prayer for gifts of the Spirit*

Questions for Review

- What does the passage from John 16:5-7 tell us about the Spirit's work in relation to Christ?
- What does the passage from Ephesians 3:16 tell us about his work? Compare this to 1 Corinthians 12:3.
- What does the passage from John 16:8-11 tell us about the Spirit's work in the unbelieving world, and among the disciples of Christ?
- How do we see this at work on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2)?
- What is the meaning of the word "Paraclete" or "Comforter"?
- How does the Spirit work with the Word of God?

Questions for Discussion

- Given this account of the person and work of the Holy Ghost, what do you think would be the outward signs of his presence and activity would you expect to see in a human life? What might advance or hinder his work in the soul?
- Pentecostal Christians look for evidence of the Spirit's work in speaking in tongues and other supernatural gifts (healing, exorcism, etc.). Where would you look for evidence of the Spirit's work?
- What is the difference between the Holy Spirit, the spirit of the age (or of the world), and the human spirit?

