

as she is, in all things, by the Holy Ghost, to fix one special day, in the Year, for the offering a solemn homage to the blessed Trinity, whereas all our adorations, all our acts of thanksgiving, all our petitions, are ever being presented to It,—such motive is to be found in the change which was being introduced, at that period, into the liturgical Calendar. Up to about the year 1000, the Feasts of Saints marked on the general Calendar, and universally kept, were very few. From that time, they began to be more numerous; and there was evidence that their number would go on increasing. The time would come, when the Sunday's Office, which is specially consecrated to the blessed Trinity, must make way for that of the Saints, as often as one of their Feasts occurred on a Sunday. As a sort of compensation for this celebration of the memory of God's Servants on the very day which was sacred to the Holy Trinity, it was considered right, that once, at least, in the course of the Year, a Sunday should be set apart for the exclusive and direct expression of the worship which the Church pays to the great God, who has vouchsafed to reveal himself to mankind in his ineffable Unity and in his eternal Trinity.



The very essence of the Christian Faith consists in the knowledge and adoration of One God in Three Persons. This is the Mystery whence all others flow. Our Faith centres in this as in the master-truth of all it knows in this life, and as the infinite object whose vision is to form our eternal happiness; and yet, we only know it, because it has pleased God to reveal himself thus to our lowly intelligence, which, after all, can never fathom the infinite perfections of that God, who necessarily *inhabiteth light inaccessible*.<sup>1</sup> Human reason may, of itself, come to the knowledge of the existence of God as Creator of all beings; it

<sup>1</sup> 1 Tim., vi. 16.

may, by its own innate power, form to itself an idea of his perfections by the study of his works; but the knowledge of God's intimate being can only come to us by means of his own gracious revelation.

It was God's good-pleasure to make known to us his essence, in order to bring us into closer union with himself, and to prepare us, in some way, for that face-to-face vision of himself which he intends giving us in eternity: but his revelation is gradual; he takes mankind from brightness unto brightness, fitting it for the full knowledge and adoration of Unity in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity. During the period preceding the Incarnation of the eternal Word, God seems intent on inculcating the idea of his Unity, for polytheism was the infectious error of mankind; and every notion of there being a spiritual and sole cause of all things would have been effaced on earth, had not the infinite goodness of that God watched over its preservation.

Not that the Old Testament Books were altogether silent on the Three Divine Persons, whose ineffable relations are eternal; only, the mysterious passages, which spoke of them, were not understood by the people at large; whereas, in the Christian Church, a child of seven will answer them that ask him, that, in God, the Three Divine Persons have but one and the same nature, but one and the same Divinity. When the Book of Genesis tells us, that God spoke in the plural, and said: *Let Us make man to our image and likeness*,<sup>1</sup> the Jew bows down and believes, but he understands not the sacred text; the Christian, on the contrary, who has been enlightened by the complete revelation of God, sees, under this expression, the Three Persons acting together in the formation of Man; the light of Faith developes the great truth to him, and tells him that, within himself, there is a

<sup>1</sup> Gen, i. 26.

likeness to the blessed Three in One. Power, Understanding, and Will, are three faculties within him, and yet he himself is but one being.

In the Books of Proverbs, Wisdom, and Ecclesiasticus, Solomon speaks, in sublime language, of him who is eternal *Wisdom*; he tells us, and he uses every variety of grandest expression to tell us, of the divine essence of this *Wisdom*, and of his being a distinct Person in the Godhead;—but, how few among the people of Israel could see through the veil? Isaias heard the voice of the Seraphim, as they stood around God's throne; he heard them singing, in alternate choirs, and with a joy intense because eternal, this hymn: *Holy! Holy! Holy! is the Lord!*<sup>1</sup> but who will explain to men this triple *Sanctus*, of which the echo is heard here below, when we mortals give praise to our Creator? So, again, in the Psalms, and the prophetic Books, a flash of light will break suddenly upon us; a brightness of some mysterious *Three* will dazzle us; but, it passes away, and obscurity returns seemingly all the more palpable; we have but the sentiment of the divine Unity deeply impressed on our inmost soul, and we adore the Incomprehensible, the Sovereign Being.

The world had to wait for the *fulness of time* to be completed; and then, God would send, into this world, his Only Son, Begotten of him from all eternity. This his most merciful purpose has been carried out, and *the Word made Flesh hath dwelt among us.*<sup>2</sup> By seeing his glory, *the glory of the Only Begotten Son of the Father,*<sup>3</sup> we have come to know that, in God, there is Father and Son. The Son's Mission to our earth, by the very revelation it gave us of himself, taught us that God is, eternally, Father, for whatsoever is in God is eternal. But for this merciful revelation, which is an anticipation of the light await-

<sup>1</sup> Is. vi. 3.<sup>2</sup> St. John, i. 14.<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

ing us in the next life, our knowledge of God would have been too imperfect. It was fitting, that there should be some proportion, between the light of Faith, and that of the Vision reserved for the future; it was not enough for man to know that God is One.

So that, we now know the Father, from whom comes, as the Apostle tells us, *all paternity*, even on earth.<sup>1</sup> We know him not only as the creative power, which has produced every being outside himself; but, guided as it is by Faith, our soul's eye respectfully penetrates into the very essence of the Godhead, and there beholds the Father begetting a Son like unto himself. But, in order to teach us the Mystery, that Son came down upon our earth. Himself has told us expressly, that *no one knoweth the Father, but the Son, and he to whom it shall please the Son to reveal him.*<sup>2</sup> Glory, then, be to the Son, who has vouchsafed to show us the Father! and glory to the Father, whom the Son hath revealed unto us!

The intimate knowledge of God has come to us by the Son, whom the Father, in his love, has given to us.<sup>3</sup> And this Son of God, who in order to raise up our minds even to his own Divine Nature, has clad himself, by his Incarnation, with our Human Nature, has taught us that he and his Father are one;<sup>4</sup>—that they are one and the same Essence, in distinction of Persons. One begets; the other is begotten; the One is named Power; the Other, Wisdom, or Intelligence. The Power cannot be without the Intelligence, nor the Intelligence without the Power, in the sovereignly perfect Being: but, both the One, and the Other produce a Third term.

The Son, who had been sent by the Father, had ascended into heaven, with the Human Nature which he had united to himself for all future eternity; and,

<sup>1</sup> Eph. iii. 15.

<sup>2</sup> St. Matth. xi. 27.

<sup>3</sup> St. John, iii. 16.

<sup>4</sup> St. John, xvii. 22.

lo ! the Father and the Son send into this world, the Spirit who proceeds from them both. It was a new Gift, and it taught man that the Lord God was in Three Persons. The Spirit, the eternal link of the first Two, is Will, he is Love, in the divine Essence. In God, then, is the fulness of Being, without beginning, without succession, without increase,—for there is nothing which he has not. In these Three eternal terms of his uncreated Substance, is the Act, pure and infinite.

The sacred Liturgy, whose object is the glorification of God and the commemoration of his works, follows, each year, the sublime phases of these manifestations, whereby the Sovereign Lord has made known his whole self to mortals. Under the sombre colours of Advent, we commemorated the period of expectation, during which the radiant Triangle sent forth but few of its rays to mankind. The world, during those four thousand years, was praying heaven for a Liberator, a Messiah ; and it was God's own Son that was to be this Liberator, this Messiah. That we might have the full knowledge of the prophecies which foretold him, it was necessary that he himself should actually come :—a Child was born unto us,<sup>1</sup> and then we had the key to the Scriptures. When we adored that Son, we adored also the Father, who sent him to us in the Flesh, and to whom he is consubstantial. This Word of Life, whom we have seen, whom we have heard, whom our hands have handled<sup>2</sup> in the Humanity which he deigned to assume, has proved himself to be truly a Person, a Person distinct from the Father, for One sends, and the Other is sent. In this second Divine Person, we have found our Mediator, who has re-united the creation to its Creator ; we have found the Redeemer of our sins, the Light of our souls, the Spouse we had so long desired.

Having passed through the mysteries which he

<sup>1</sup> Is. ix. 6.

<sup>2</sup> 1 St. John, i. 1.

himself wrought, we next celebrated the descent of the Holy Spirit, who had been announced as coming to perfect the work of the Son of God. We adored him, and acknowledged him to be distinct from the Father and the Son, who had sent him to us, with the mission of abiding with us.<sup>1</sup> He manifested himself by divine operations which are especially his own, and were the object of his coming. He is the soul of the Church; he keeps her in the truth taught her by the Son. He is the source, the principle, of the sanctification of our souls; and, in them he wishes to make his dwelling. In a word, the mystery of the Trinity has become to us, not only a dogma made known to our mind by Revelation, but, moreover, a practical truth given to us by the unheard of munificence of the Three Divine Persons; the *Father*, who has adopted us; the *Son*, whose brethren and joint-heirs we are; and the *Holy Ghost*, who governs us, and dwells within us.

Let us, then, begin this Day, by giving glory to the One God in Three Persons. For this end, we will unite with holy Church, who, in her Office of Prime, recites on this Solemnity, as, also, on every Sunday not taken up by a Feast, the magnificent Symbol, known as the *Athanasian Creed*. It gives us, in a summary of much majesty and precision, the doctrine of the holy Doctor, Saint Athanasius, regarding the mysteries of the Trinity and Incarnation.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> St. John, xiv. 16.

<sup>2</sup> "It is a psalm or hymn of praise, of confession, and of profound, self-prostrating homage, parallel to the Canticles of the elect in heaven. It appeals to the imagination quite as much as to the intellect. It is the war-song of faith, with which we warn first ourselves, then each other, and then all those who are within its hearing, and the hearing of the Truth, who our God is, and how we must worship Him, and how vast our responsibility will be if we know what to believe, and yet believe not. It is

"The Psalm that gathers in one glorious lay

"All chants that e'er from heaven to earth found way;

## THE ATHANASIAN CREED.

Quicumque vult salvus esse, ante omnia opus est ut teneat Catholicam fidem.

Quam nisi quisque integram inviolatamque servaverit, absque dubio in æternum peribit.

Fides autem Catholica hæc est, ut unum Deum in Trinitate, et Trinitatem in Unitate veneremur ;

Neque confundentes personas, neque substantiam separantes.

Alia est enim persona Patris, alia Filii, alia Spiritus sancti.

Sed Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus sancti una est divinitas, æqualis gloria, coæterna majestas.

Qualis Pater, talis Filius, talis Spiritus sanctus.

Increatus Pater, increatus Filius, increatus Spiritus sanctus.

Immensus Pater, immensus Filius, immensus Spiritus sanctus.

Æternus Pater, æternus Filius, æternus Spiritus sanctus.

Whosoever would be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholic faith.

Which faith, except every one doth keep entire, and unviolated, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly.

Now the Catholic faith is this : that we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity ;

Neither confounding the persons, nor dividing the substance.

For one is the person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost.

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.

Such as the Father is, such is the Son, such is the Holy Ghost.

The Father is uncreated, the Son is uncreated, the Holy Ghost is uncreated.

The Father is incomprehensible, the Son is incomprehensible, the Holy Ghost is incomprehensible.

The Father is eternal, the Son is eternal, the Holy Ghost is eternal.

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“ Creed of the Saints, and Anthem of the Blest,

“ And calm-breathed warning of the kindest love,

“ That ever heaved a wakeful mother's breast.

“ For myself, I have ever felt it as the most simple and sublime, the “ most devotional formulary to which Christianity has given birth, “ more so even than the *Veni Creator* and the *Te Deum*.” (Dr. Newman ; *Grammar of Assent*, page 129.) [Note added by Tr.]

And yet they are not three eternal, but one eternal.

As also they are not three uncreated, nor three incomprehensibles, but one uncreated, and one incomprehensible.

In like manner the Father is almighty, the Son is almighty, the Holy Ghost is almighty.

And yet they are not three almighties, but one almighty.

So, the Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Ghost is God.

And yet they are not three Gods, but one God.

So, the Father is Lord, the Son is Lord, the Holy Ghost is Lord.

And yet they are not three Lords, but one Lord.

For, as we are compelled, by the Christian truth, to acknowledge each person, by himself, to be God and Lord: so, are we forbidden, by the Catholic religion, to say, there are three Gods, or three Lords.

The Father is made of no one, neither created, nor begotten.

The Son is from the Father alone; not made, nor created, but begotten.

The Holy Ghost is from the Father and the Son; not made, nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding.

There is, then, one Father, not three Fathers; one Son, not three Sons; one Holy Ghost, not three Holy Ghosts.

Et tamen non tres æterni, sed unus æternus.

Sicut non tres increati, nec tres immensi, sed unus increatus, et unus immensus.

Similiter omnipotens Pater, omnipotens Filius, omnipotens Spiritus sanctus.

Et tamen non tres omnipotentes, sed unus omnipotens.

Ita Deus Pater, Deus Filius, Deus Spiritus sanctus.

Et tamen non tres Dii, sed unus est Deus.

Ita Dominus Pater, Dominus Filius, Dominus Spiritus sanctus.

Et tamen non tres Domini, sed unus est Dominus.

Quia sicut singillatim unamquamque personam Deum ac Dominum confiteri Christiana veritate compellimur: ita tres Deos aut Dominos dicere, Catholica religione prohibemur.

Pater a nullo est factus, nec creatus, nec genitus.

Filius a Patre solo est: non factus, nec creatus, sed genitus.

Spiritus sanctus a Patre et Filio, non factus, nec creatus, nec genitus, sed procedens.

Unus ergo Pater, non tres Patres; unus Filius, non tres Filii: unus Spiritus sanctus, non tres Spiritus sancti.

Et in hac Trinitate nihil prius aut posterius, nihil majus aut minus: sed totæ tres personæ coæternæ sibi sunt, et coæquales.

Ita ut per omnia, sicut jam supra dictum est, et Unitas in Trinitate, et Trinitas in Unitate veneranda sit.

Qui vult ergo salvus esse: ita de Trinitate sentiat.

Sed necessarium est ad æternam salutem: ut Incarnationem quoque Domini nostri Jesu Christi fideliter credat.

Est ergo fides recta, ut credamus et confiteamur: quia Dominus noster Jesus Christus Dei Filius, Deus et homo est.

Deus est ex substantia Patris ante sæcula genitus: et homo est ex substantia matris in sæculo natus.

Perfectus Deus, perfectus homo: ex anima rationali, et humana carne subsistens.

Æqualis Patri secundum divinitatem: minor Patre secundum humanitatem.

Qui licet Deus sit, et homo: non duo tamen, sed unus est Christus.

Unus autem non conversione divinitatis in carnem, sed assumptione humanitatis in Deum.

Unus omnino, non confusione substantiæ, sed unitate personæ.

Nam sicut anima rationalis et caro unus est homo,

And in this Trinity, there is nothing before or after, nothing greater or less; but the whole three Persons are co-eternal to one another, and co-equal.

So that, in all things, as hath been already said above, the Unity is to be worshipped in Trinity, and the Trinity in Unity.

He, therefore, that would be saved, must thus think of the Trinity.

Furthermore, it is necessary to everlasting salvation, that he also believe rightly the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now the right faith is, that we believe and confess, that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is both God and Man.

He is God, of the substance of his Father, begotten before the world; and he is Man, of the substance of his Mother, born in the world.

Perfect God, perfect Man: subsisting of a rational soul, and human flesh.

Equal to the Father according to his Godhead: lesser than the Father, according to his Manhood.

Who although he be both God and Man, yet he is not two, but one, Christ.

One, not by the conversion of the Godhead into flesh, but by the taking of the Manhood unto God.

One altogether, not by confusion of substance, but by unity of person.

For, as the rational soul and the flesh is one man, so, God

and Man is one Christ.

Who suffered for our salvation; descended into hell; rose again, the third day, from the dead.

He ascended into heaven; he sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the living and the dead.

At whose coming, all men shall rise again, with their bodies; and shall give an account of their own works.

And they that have done good, shall go into life everlasting; and they that have done evil, into everlasting fire.

This is the Catholic faith: which except every man believe faithfully and stedfastly, he cannot be saved.

ita Deus et homo unus est Christus.

Qui passus est pro salute nostra, descendit ad inferos, tertia die resurrexit a mortuis.

Ascendit ad cœlos, sedet ad dexteram Dei Patris omnipotentis: inde venturus est judicare vivos et mortuos.

Ad cujus adventum omnes homines resurgere habent cum corporibus suis, et redditori sunt de factis propriis rationem.

Et qui bona egerunt, ibunt in vitam æternam; qui vero mala, in ignem æternum.

Hæc est fides Catholica: quam nisi quisque fideliter, firmiterque crediderit, salvus esse non poterit.

## TIERCE.

ANT. Praise and perpetual glory be to God, Father, and Son, together with the holy Paraclete, for ever and ever.

ANT. Laus et perennis gloria Deo Patri, et Filio, sancto simul Paraclito, in sæculorum sæcula.

## CAPITULUM.

(Rom. xi.)

O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God: how incomprehensible are his judgments, and how unsearchable his ways!

B. *breve.*—Let us bless the Father, and the Son, \* With the Holy Ghost. Let us bless.

O altitudo divitiarum sapientiæ et scientiæ Dei: quam incomprehensibilia sunt judicia ejus, et investigabiles viæ ejus!

B. *breve.*—Benedicamus Patrem et Filium, \* Cum sancto Spiritu. Benedicamus.