



THE APOSTLES' CREED

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

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
and born of the virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended into hell.
The third day he rose from the dead.
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of
God the Father Almighty.
From there he will come to judge
the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

The Apostles' Creed

"And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord."



Apostles' Creed

The Church always believes as she prays. From the time of the apostles until the current age, the way the Church prays effects what she believes. Her prayer is most completely revealed within the liturgical life – the celebration of the Sacraments and other ritualistic actions. In the second century, the Church of Rome was using a baptismal formula, which had the catechumens (those to be baptized) declare their belief in the Triune God as well as the Church and the resurrection of the body via a series of questions. These questions, which find similarity to the baptismal rites of today, developed into the Apostles' Creed by the end of the seventh century.

Commentary is by Saint Thomas Aquinas. By universal consent, Thomas Aquinas is the preeminent spokesman of the Catholic tradition of reason and of divine revelation. He is one of the great teachers of the medieval Catholic Church, honored with the titles Doctor of the Church and Angelic Doctor.

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

It is not only necessary for Christians to believe in one God who is the Creator of heaven and earth and of all things; but also they must believe that God is the Father and that Christ is the true Son of God. This, as St. Peter says, is not mere fable, but is certain and proved by the word of God on the Mount of Transfiguration. “For we have not by following artificial fables made known to you the power and presence of our Lord Jesus Christ; but we were eyewitnesses of His greatness. For He received from God the Father honor and glory, this voice coming down to Him from the excellent glory: ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Listen to Him.’ And this voice, we heard brought from heaven, when we were with Him in the holy mount” [2 Pet 1:16]. Christ Jesus Himself in many places called God His Father, and Himself the Son of God. Both the Apostles and the Fathers placed in the articles of faith that Christ is the Son of God by saying: “And (I believe) in Jesus Christ, His (i.e., God’s) only Son”.

Errors

There were, however, certain heretics who erred in this belief. Photinus, for instance, believed that Christ is not the Son of God but a good man who, by a good life and by doing the will of God, merited to be called the son of God by adoption; and so Christ who lived a good life and did the will of God merited to be called the son of God. Moreover, this error would not have Christ living before the Blessed Virgin, but would have Him begin to exist only at His conception. Accordingly, there are here two errors: the **first**, that Christ is not the true Son of God according to His nature; and the **second**, that Christ in His entire being began to exist in time. Our faith, however, holds that He is the Son of God in His nature, and that he is from all eternity. Now, we have definite authority against these errors in the Holy Scriptures. Against the **first**

error it is said that Christ is not only the Son, but also the only-begotten Son of the Father: “The only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him:” [Jn 1:18]. And again the **second error** it is said: “Before Abraham was made, I AM” [Jn 8:58]. It is evident that Abraham lived before the Blessed Virgin. And what the Fathers added to the other [Nicene] Creed, namely, “the only-begotten Son of God,” is against the first error; and “born of the Father before all ages” is against the second error.

Sabellius said that Christ indeed was before the Blessed Virgin, but he held that the Father Himself became incarnate and, therefore, the Father and the Son is the same Person. This is an error because it takes away the Trinity of Persons in God, and against it is this authority: “I am not alone, but I and the Father who sent Me” [Jn 8:16]. It is clear that one cannot be sent from himself. Sabellius errs therefore, and in the [Nicene] Creed of the Fathers it is said: “God of God; Light of Light,” that is, we are to believe in God the Son from God the Father, and the Son who is Light from the Father who is Light.

Arius, although he would say that Christ was before the Blessed Virgin and that the Person of the Father is other than the Person of the Son, nevertheless made a three-fold attribution to Christ: **(1)** that the Son of God was a creature; **(2)** that He is not from eternity, but was formed the noblest of all creatures in time by God; **(3)** that God the Son is not of one nature with God the Father, and therefore that He was not true God. But this too is erroneous and contrary to the teaching of the Holy Scriptures. It is written: “I and the Father are one” [Jn 10:30]. That is, in nature; and therefore, just as the Father always existed, so also the Son; and just as the Father is true God, so also is the Son. That Christ is a creature, as said by Arius, is contradicted in the “Symbol” by the Fathers: “True God of true God;” and the assertion that Christ is not from eternity but in time is also contrary to the [Nicene] Creed: “Begotten not made;” and finally, that Christ is not of the same substance as the Father is denied by the [Nicene] Creed: “Consubstantial with the Father.”

The truth

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

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

The testimony of St. John concerning the Word of God destroys these three heresies, viz., that of Photinus in the words: **“In the beginning was the Word;”** that of Sabellius in saying: **“And the Word was with God;”** and that of Arius when it says: **“And the Word was God”** [Jn 1:1].

But a word in us is not the same as the Word in God. In us the word is an accident; whereas **in God the Word is the same as God**, since there is nothing in God that is not of the essence of God. No one would say God has not a Word, because such would make God wholly without knowledge; and therefore, as God always existed, so also did His Word ever exist. Just as a sculptor works from a form which he has previously thought out, which is his word; so also God makes all things by His Word, as it were through His art: “All things were made by Him” [Jn 1:3].

Now, if the **Word of God is the Son of God** and all the words of God bear a certain likeness of this Word, then we ought to hear the Word of God gladly; for such is a **sign that we love God**. We ought also believe the word of God whereby the Word of God dwells in us, who is Christ: **“That Christ may dwell by faith in your hearts”** [Eph 3:17]. “And you have not His word abiding in you” [Jn 5:38]. But we ought not only to believe that the Word of God dwells in us, but also we should meditate often upon this; for otherwise we will not be benefitted to the extent that such meditation is a great help against sin: your words have I hidden in my heart, that I may not sin against You” [Ps 108:11]. Again it is said of the just man: “On His law he shall meditate day and night” [Ps 1:2]. And it is said of the Blessed Virgin that she **“kept all these words, pondering them in her heart”** [Lk 2:19]. Then also, one should communicate the word of God to others by advising, preaching and inflaming their hearts: “Let no evil speech proceed from your mouth; but that which is good, to the edification of faith” [Eph 4:29]. Likewise, “let the word of Christ dwell in you abundantly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another” [Col 3:16]. So also: “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, entreat, rebuke in all patience and doctrine” [2 Tim 4:2]. Finally, we ought to put the word of God into practice: **“Be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves”** [James 1:22].

The **Blessed Virgin** observed these five points when she gave birth to the Word of God. First, **she heard what was said to her**: “The Holy Spirit shall come upon you” [Lk 1:35]. Then she gave **her consent through faith**: “Behold the handmaid of the Lord” [Lk 1:38]. And **she also received and carried the Word in her womb**. Then **she brought forth the Word of God** and, finally, **she nourished and cared for Him**. And so the Church sings: “Only a Virgin nourished Him who is King of the Angels” [Fourth Responsorial, Office of the Circumcision, Dominican Breviary.].

End