



## 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

"I Believe in One God, the Father the Almighty,  
Maker of Heaven and Earth."



## 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.

### **“I Believe in One God, the Father the Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth.”**

Among all the truths which the faithful must believe, this is the first— that there is one God. We must see that God means the ruler and provider of all things. He, therefore, believes in God who believes that everything in this world is governed and provided for by Him. He who would believe that all things come into being by chance does not believe that there is a God. No one is so foolish as to deny that all nature, which operates with a certain definite time and order, is subject to the rule and foresight and an orderly arrangement of someone. We see how the sun, the moon, and the stars, and all natural things follow a determined course, which would be impossible if they were merely products of chance. Hence, as is spoken of in the Psalm, he is indeed foolish who does not believe in God: “The fool said in his heart: There is no God” [Ps 13:1].

There are those, however, who believe that God rules and sustains all things of nature, and nevertheless do not believe God is the overseer of the acts of man; hence they believe that human acts do not come under God's providence. They reason thus because they see in this world how the good are afflicted and how the evil enjoy good things, so that Divine Providence seems to disregard human affairs. Hence the words of Job are offered to apply to this view: “He does not consider our things; and He walks about the poles of heaven” [22:14]. But this is indeed absurd. It is just as though a person who is ignorant of medicine should see a doctor give water to one patient and wine to another. He would believe that this is mere chance, since he does not understand the science of medicine which for good reasons prescribes for one wine and for another water. So is it with God. For God in His just and wise Providence knows what is good and necessary for men; and hence He afflicts some who are good

**We are led also to acknowledge the great dignity of man.** God made all things for man: “You subjected all things under his feet” [Ps 8:8], and man is more like to God than all other creatures save the Angels: “Let us make man to Our image and likeness” [Gen 1:26]. God does not say this of the heavens or of the stars, but of man; and this likeness of God in man **does not refer to the body but to the human soul**, which **has free will and is incorruptible**, and therein **man resembles God** more than other creatures do. We ought, therefore, to consider the nobleness of man as less than the Angels but greater than all other creatures. Let us not, therefore, diminish his dignity by sin and by an inordinate desire for earthly things which are beneath us and are made for our service. Accordingly, we must rule over things of the earth and use them, and be subject to God by obeying and serving Him. And thus we shall come to the enjoyment of God forever.

End

because they wish to measure divine power according to human power; and since man cannot make anything except from material which already lies at hand, so also it must be with God. But this is false. Man needs matter to make anything, because he is a builder of particular things and must bring form out of definite material. He merely determines the form of his work, and can be only the cause of the form that he builds. God, however, is the universal cause of all things, and He not only creates the form but also the matter. Hence, He makes out of nothing, and thus it is said in the Creed: "the Creator of heaven and earth." We must see in this the difference between making and creating. **To create is to make something out of nothing**; and if everything were destroyed, He could again make all things. He, thus, makes the blind to see, raises up the dead, and works other similar miracles. "Your power is at hand when You will" [Wis 12:18].

## Benefits

From a consideration of all this, one is led to a fivefold benefit. **(1)** We are led to a knowledge of the divine majesty. Now, if a maker is greater than the things he makes, then God is greater than all things which He has made. "With whose beauty, if they being delighted, took them to be gods, let them know how much the Lord of them is more beautiful than they... Or if they admired their power and their effects, let them understand by them that He that made them, is mightier than they" [Wis 13:3-4]. Hence, whatsoever can even be affirmed or thought of is less than God. "Behold: God is great, exceeding our knowledge" [Job 36:26].

**(2)** We are led to give thanks to God. Because God is the Creator of all things, it is certain that what we are and what we have is from God: "What do you have that you did not receive?" [1 Cor 4:7]. "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof; the world and all who dwell on it" [Ps 23:1]. "We, therefore, must give thanks to God: What shall I render to the Lord for all the things that He has done for me?" [Ps 115:12].

**(3)** We are led to bear our troubles in patience. Although every created thing is from God and is good according to its nature, yet, if something harms us or brings us pain, we believe that such comes from God, not as a fault in Him, but because God permits no evil that is not for good. Affliction purifies from sin, brings low the guilty, and urges on the good to a love of God: "If we have received good things from the hand of God, why should we not receive evil?" [Job 2:10].

**(4)** We are led to a right use of created things. Thus, we ought to use created things as having been made by God for two purposes: **for His glory**, "since all things are made for Himself" [Prov 16:4] (that is, for the glory of God), and finally **for our profit**: "Which the Lord your God created for the service of all the nations" [Deut 4:19]. Thus, we ought to use things for God's glory in order to please Him no less than for our own profit, that is, so as to avoid sin in using them: All things are yours, and we have given you what we received of your hand" [1 Chron 29:14]. Whatever we have, be it learning or beauty, we must revere all and use all for the glory of God.

and allows certain wicked men to prosper. But he is foolish indeed who believes this is due to chance, because he does not know the causes and method of God's dealing with men. "I wish that God might speak with you, and would open His lips to you, that He might show you the secrets of wisdom, and that His law is manifold: and you might understand that He exacts much less of you than your iniquity deserves" [Job 11:5-6].

We must, therefore, firmly believe that God governs and regulates not only all nature, but also the actions of men. "And they said: The Lord shall not see; neither shall the God of Jacob understand. Understand, ye senseless among the people, and, you fools, be wise at last. He who planted the ear, shall He not hear, He who formed the eye, does He not consider?... The Lord knows the thoughts of men" [Ps 93:7-11]. God sees all things, both our thoughts and the hidden desires of our will. Thus, the necessity of doing good is especially imposed on man since all his thoughts, words and actions are known in the sight of God: "All things are naked and open to His eyes" [Heb 4:13].

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

## Motives for believing in many gods

There are four motives which have led men to believe in a number of gods:

**(1) The dullness of the human intellect.** Dull men, not capable of going beyond sensible things, did not believe anything existed except physical bodies. Hence, they held that the world is disposed and ruled by those bodies which to them seemed most beautiful and most valuable in this world. And, accordingly, to things such as the sun, the moon and the stars, they attributed and gave a divine worship. Such men are like to one who, going to a royal court to see the king, believes that whoever is sumptuously dressed or of official position is the king! "They have imagined either the sun and moon or the circle of the stars... to be the gods that rule the world. With whose beauty, if they being delighted, took them to be gods..." [Wis 7:2-3].

**(2) The second motive was human adulation.** Some men, wishing to fawn upon kings and rulers, obey and subject themselves to them and show them honor which is due to God alone. After the death of these rulers, sometimes men make them gods, and sometimes this is done even whilst they are living. "That every nation may know that Nabuchodonosor is god of the earth, and besides him there is no other" [Judith 5:29].

(3) **The human affection for sons and relatives** was a third motive. Some, because of the excessive love which they had for their family, caused statues of them to be erected after their death, and gradually a divine honor was attached to these statues. “For men serving either their affections or their kings, gave the incommunicable Name to stones and wood” [Wis 14:21].

(4) The last motive is **the malice of the devil**. The devil wished from the beginning to be equal to God, and thus he said: “I will ascend above the height of the clouds. I will be like the Most High” [Is 14:14]. The devil still entertains this desire. His entire purpose is to bring about that man adore him and offer sacrifices to him; not that he takes delight in a dog or cat that is offered to him, he does relish the fact that thereby irreverence is shown to God. Thus, he spoke to Christ: “All these will I give you, if you fall down and adore me” [Mt 4:9]. For this reason those demons who entered into idols said that they would be venerated as gods. “All the gods of the Gentiles are demons” [Ps 105:5]. “The things which the heathens sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God” [1 Cor 10:20].

Although all this is terrible to contemplate, yet at times there are any who fall into these above-mentioned four causes. Not by their words and hearts, but by **their actions**, they show that they believe in many gods. Thus, those who believe that the celestial bodies influence the will of man and regulate their affairs by astrology, really make the heavenly bodies gods, and subject themselves to them. “Be not afraid of the signs of heaven which the heathens fear. For the laws of the people are vain” [Jer 10:2-3]. In the same category are all those who obey temporal rulers more than God, in that which they ought not; such actually set these up as gods. “We ought to obey God rather than men” [Acts 5:29]. So also those who love their sons and kinsfolk more than God show by their actions that they believe in many gods; as likewise do those who love food more than God: “Whose god is their belly” [Phil 3:19]. Moreover, all who take part in magic or in incantations believe that the demons are gods, because they seek from the devil that which God alone can give, such as revealing the future or discovering hidden things. We must, therefore, believe that there is but one God.

It has been shown that we must **first of all believe there is but one God**. Now, the **second is that this God is the Creator** and maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible. Let us leave more subtle reasons for the present and show by a simple example that all things are created and made by God. If a person, upon entering a certain house, should feel a warmth at the door of the house, and going within should feel a greater warmth, and so on the more he went into its interior, he would believe that somewhere within was a fire, even if he did not see the fire itself which caused this heat which he felt. So also is it when we consider the things of this world. For one finds all things arranged in different degrees of beauty and worth, and the closer things approach to God, the more beautiful and better they are found to be. Thus, the heavenly bodies are more beautiful and nobler than those which are below them; and, likewise, the invisible things in relation to the visible. Therefore, it must be seen that all these things proceed from one God who gives His being and beauty to each and everything. “All men are vain, in whom there is not the

knowledge of God: and who by these good things that are seen could not understand Him that is. Neither by attending to the works have acknowledged who was the workman.... For by the greatness of the beauty, and of the creature, the creator of them may be seen, so as to be known thereby” [Wis 13:1,5]. Thus, therefore, it is certain for us that all things in the world are from God.

## Errors

There are three errors concerning this truth which we must avoid. **First**, the error of the Manicheans, who say that all visible created things are from the devil, and only the invisible creation is to be attributed to God. The cause of this error is that they hold that God is the highest good, which is true; but they also assert that whatsoever comes from good is itself good. Thus, not distinguishing what is evil and what is good, they believed that whatever is partly evil is essentially evil—as, for instance, fire because it burns is essentially evil, and so is water because it causes suffocation, and so with other things. Because no sensible thing is essentially good, but mixed with evil and defective, they believed that all visible things are not made by God who is good, but by the evil one. Against them St. Augustine gives this illustration. A certain man entered the shop of a carpenter and found tools which, if he should fall against them, would seriously wound him. Now, if he would consider the carpenter a bad workman because he made and used such tools, it would be stupid of him indeed. In the same way it is absurd to say that created things are evil because they may be harmful; for what is harmful to one may be useful to another. This error is contrary to the faith of the Church, and against it we say: “Of all things visible and invisible” [Nicene Creed]. “In the beginning God created heaven and earth” [Gen 1:1]. “All things were made by Him” [Jn 1:3].

The **second** error is of those who hold the world has existed from eternity: “Since the time that the fathers slept, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation” [2 Pet 3:4]. They are led to this view because they do not know how to imagine the beginning of the world. They are, says Rabbi Moses, in like case to a boy who immediately upon his birth was placed upon an island, and remained ignorant of the manner of child-bearing and of infants’ birth. thus, when he grew up, if one should explain all these things to him, he would not believe how a man could once have been in his mother’s womb. So also those who consider the world as it is now, do not believe that it had a beginning. This is also contrary to the faith of the Church, and hence we say: “the Maker of heaven and earth.” For if they were made, they did not exist forever. “He spoke and they were made” [Ps 148:5 ].

The **third** is the error which holds that God made the world from pre-existing matter (*ex praejacenti materia*). They are led to this view