

<Text 2>

(Cat, 6)

<Sermon on the Creed and the Virtues>

Dearly beloved, clerics as well as lay, young as well as old, hear how the Lord spoke to his priests through the Prophet: *If you make known to an unjust person his injustice, you indeed will save your life; but if you do not make it known, he will in fact die in his injustice, but his blood I will require at your hand* (Ezek. 3, 18–19); that is, their sins.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, *seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near; let the wicked person abandon his evil ways and the unjust man his worst thoughts; and let him return to the Lord, for the Lord abounds in forgiveness* (Is. 55, 6–7).

First of all you ought to believe IN GOD THE FATHER ALMIGHTY, CREATOR OF HEAVEN AND EARTH; AND IN JESUS CHRIST HIS ONLY SON, OUR LORD<sup>2</sup>, THROUGH WHOM ALL THINGS WERE MADE,<sup>3</sup> true God and true man; AND IN THE HOLY SPIRIT,<sup>5</sup> enlightener and guarantor of every good thing: three persons and one God in Trinity, one substance and one majesty. Therefore, let us love God the Father with all our heart and with all our soul (cfr Mt. 22, 37; Mk. 12, 30; Lk. 10, 27), who loved us so much that *he did not spare his own Son, but handed him over for the sake of us all* (Rm. 8, 32). Let us love this Son of God, who is equal to God the Father in every way. He became for us the Son of man *in order to redeem us*, and by his own blood *he washed us from our sins* (cfr Rev. 1, 5). Let us also love the Holy Spirit, PROCEEDING FROM THE FATHER AND THE SON<sup>8</sup>, with whose sanctification we have been sealed in baptism and made children of God, and by whose inspiration we do all the good that we do.

And behold, here are the works which the Lord himself commands that you should practice: love, *for love covers a multitude of sins* (1 Pet. 4, 8); chastity, because chastity draws humans to heaven;

justice, for it is written: *Blessed are they who observe justice at all times* (Ps. 106, 3 [Vulg. Ps. 105, 3]); humility, because *everyone who humbles himself will be exalted* (cfr Lk.14, 11; 18, 14); patience, for it is written: *in your patience you will be master of your lives* (Lk.21, 19); kindness, because all good things will be given to the one who has a good will; modesty and gentleness, just as it is written: *But the gentle will inherit the land, and be delighted in abundant peace* (Ps. 37, 11 [Vulg. Ps. 36, 11]); hospitality, because many have pleased God through hospitality; alms-giving to the poor of Christ cheerfully without regret, for *God loves a cheerful giver* (2 Cor. 9, 7).

And: what you do not wish for yourself, do not do to another (cfr Tob. 4, 16).<sup>9</sup> Do not sin, either by theft, fornication, murder, rape, or doing violence to anyone. Do not be greedy, or let a curse proceed from your mouth. Do not be envious, because through envy death entered into the world, and envy devours everything good. Do not be detractors, plotting evil against anyone. But above all, dearly beloved, flee the deadly sins that drown a person in eternal punishment (some of which we have mentioned already), that is: sacrilege, murder, adultery, false witness, theft, rape, pride, envy, anger, drunkenness, and lust, which is the root of all evils. Whoever is aware they have done even one of these sins, unless he shall have repented, will not be able to possess the kingdom of heaven. For the Holy Spirit does not lie, saying through the Apostle: *Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor adulterers, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers will possess the kingdom of God* (1 Cor. 6, 9–10). And let no one force another to drink more than one ought. Do not commit perjury, for it is written: *A man who swears many oaths will be filled with iniquity* (Sir. 23, 11; [Eccli. 23, 12]); but rather, always foreseeing what is good, redeem prisoners, help the liberators, clothe the naked, visit the sick, give food to the hungry and drink to the thirsty.

Listen, incline your ears, and from your heart hold to the words of God, for it is good to hear *the law of Christ* (Gal. 6, 2) and fulfill his commands. When you shall have satisfied these you will be just and

perfect, and without sorrow you will sit in the seat of the just. When you shall have done these, you will be sound, and you will live forever in heaven with the angels, happy and blessed, because without any sadness or suffering. Pain will not be remembered there, nor will old age or sleep weigh down anyone where there is no night, where there is always dignity.<sup>1</sup> There all the just will shine like the sun, just as the Savior himself said: *The just will shine like the sun in the kingdom of my Father* (Mt. 13, 43).

Therefore, dearly beloved, let us always give thanks to almighty God himself, and always pray his mercy that he preserves us in this present life, and leads us to eternal life, to whom is *honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.* (1 Tim. 1, 17).

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<sup>1</sup> *ubi semper est dignitas*: perhaps one should read “day” (*dies*) or “dignity of day” (*dignitas diei*)

## Notes to Text 2

1. A number of patristic commentators gloss “blood” in Ezek. 3, 18 as “sins.” See, for example, Ps. Cyprian/Ps. Augustine, *De duodecimo abusioibus saeculi*, c. 10 (PL 4, 879B); Julianus Pomerius, *De uita contemplatiua*, c. 20. 3 (PL 59, 435B); Pope Gregory I, *Homiliae in Ezekielem*, Hom. 11. 10 (PL 76, 910B: “Sed melius possunt sanguinis nomine peccata signari”). The switch to the third person plural (“their sins”) reveals the author’s intent that “the unjust man” refer more broadly to unjust people.

2. *Symb. Ap.*

3. *Symb. N.; Symb. N.-C.*

5. *Symb. N.; Symb. N.-C.*

8. Cfr *Symb. Athan., Symb. N.-C.*

9. Tob. 4, 16 in the Vulgate reads: *Quod ab alio oderis fieri tibi, uide ne tu aliquando alteri facias*. Text 2 states: *quod tibi non vis, alio ne facias*. I found only one source that has the exact words of Text 2, where it is also a paraphrase of Tob. 4, 16: “respicientes ante omnia ad illam sententiam quae dicit: ‘*Quod tibi non uis, alio ne facias*’” (St. Valerian, Bishop of Cemele [now Cimiez], *Homiliae 20*, Hom. 13. 7 – PL 52, 734C).

## Commentary on Text 2

Text 2 is a sermon, although it probably did not function as one in its one known ms, Wolfenbützel, HAB, Weiss. 91. Positioned at the head of a series of five creed commentaries, it was meant, with them, to offer a little library of instruction on the faith for the priest-monk (perhaps) for whom this volume was compiled. The ms is a collection volume composed of five parts put together in the early ninth century, perhaps at Worms. The fourth part contains Text 2 followed by: *Cat*, 97, a brief extract from Isidore's *Sentences*, stating that the Creed and the Lord's Prayer express in brief all of Scripture; *Cat*, 88, a sermon on the creed, comparing it to a pact made by sea-merchants, and giving a phrase by phrase exposition on the Apostles' Creed; *Cat*, 26, Pelagius' declaration of his faith to Pope Innocent; *Cat*, 9, an exposition of the Apostles' Creed attributed to Hilary of Arles (5<sup>th</sup> c.), and *Cat*, 177, Venantius Fortunatus' (6<sup>th</sup> c.) exposition on the Athanasian Creed. The fifth part of the ms is famous for containing a catechism in Old High German (OHG), which includes the Lord's Prayer and its explanation, the names of the deadly sins, further expositions on the Lord's Prayer and the creed, the text of the Apostles' Creed and the Athanasian Creed, and the Gloria, all in OHG.

Text 2 is a straightforward sermon about achieving salvation. It shows that comprehending the faith involves purity of life; believing the right faith is inseparable from a life of repentance and conversion. The partial creed quoted in Text 2 is positioned in such a way that it explains why we should repent and why we should do good works: the composer sets up God's love for us as the motivating force, which the story of the creed teaches. What should keep us in the right faith is our gratitude and love for a God who, as Father, "loved us so much that he did not spare his own Son, but handed him over to us all"; as Son, "became for us the Son of man to redeem us, and with his own blood washed us from our sins"; as Holy Spirit, "signed us in baptism and made us children of God and inspires us to do all the good that we do." These acts of love on God's part give emotion to the articles of faith recited in the

creed: the incarnation, the passion, and the sacramental life of grace in the Holy Spirit. Many of the patristic writers understood the creed as a love story, but I have not been able to find a single sentence in Text 2 that precisely quotes a patristic text. In his own words the composer helps the listener understand the Christian faith of the creed as a love story between the three persons of the Trinity and between them and us, drawing us into their communion. The first of the “works” God requires is love. The people of the Carolingian realm were taught they could have eternal bliss through acts of hospitality and alms-giving. Even when treating the sins they must strive to avoid, the tone is one of encouragement from a pastor who is also, like God, in love with his flock. It is clear that he saw the connection between knowing the creed and the transformation of society at large: the creed is a love story and the inspiration for why anyone should avoid the sins of violence and aim at acts of love. Did a perhaps rural village community in Germany ever hear this sermon? Its manuscript context, first, as the very first of a string of creed expositions that are very basic instruction (including the Apostles’ Creed and Athanasian Creed), and second, joined with OHG instruction on the faith, suggests that the sermon was studied for actual delivery in oral translation.