

<Text 18>

<A Sermon at the Handing Over of the Creed to the Competents>

(*Cat*, 132)

Beloved, the most blessed apostle Paul, in his letter to the Romans, among other injunctions of the divine law thus wrote: *Faith comes from hearing; hearing, moreover, comes through the Word of Christ* (Rm. 10, 17). On account of this, dearest ones, it is necessary that you hear through the word of the priest in what confession it is necessary for you to have been baptized in order to receive eternal life. We have the creed of the confession handed down to us by our fathers, which they taught all those to be baptized to keep spiritually in their memory. Therefore, just as it was handed down to us, so we introduce it to your love, and wish it to be always in your thoughts.

Hear, then, the creed of our confession, and with me commit it to your memory spiritually, so that when each one of you shall have been asked how she believes, she may steadfastly and faithfully respond. Here [is the creed] for the first time.

Therefore, learn with a pure heart the creed which you all heard, and entrust it to the memory of Christ in such a way that you are able to receive baptism worthily. We repeat this same creed for you, so that you can retain it more easily. Here [is the creed] for the second time: I BELIEVE. For a third time we recite it to you, so that it might fully cling to your memory. Here [is the creed] for the third time:¹ I BELIEVE IN GOD.

¹ From “so that you can retain”: cfr *Lib. ordin.* LXXXI (col. 186, 3/6)

The spiritual profession of this creed, beloved, has so much power of faith in itself, that when anyone of us shall have been placed in a position either of fear or confusion, or shall have been shaken by some terror in the dark, and she shall have said this creed faithfully in her heart, immediately she may know she has heavenly protection. And therefore, beloved, you ought to faithfully believe and commend to memory the creed just recited, so that you can have heavenly protection at all times. It ends.

I BELIEVE IN GOD, THE FATHER ALMIGHTY, CREATOR OF HEAVEN AND EARTH; AND IN JESUS CHRIST HIS ONLY SON, OUR LORD, WHO WAS CONCEIVED OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, BORN FROM THE VIRGIN MARY, SUFFERED UNDER PONTIUS PILATE, WAS CRUCIFIED, DIED AND WAS BURIED, DESCENDED TO HELL, ON THE THIRD DAY ROSE AGAIN FROM THE DEAD, ASCENDED TO HEAVEN, SAT AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD THE FATHER ALMIGHTY, WHENCE 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 ALL SINS, THE RESURRECTION OF THE FLESH, ETERNAL LIFE. AMEN. It finishes.²

² From "I believe in God": cfr *Symb. Ap.*; One difference from the *Symb. Ap.* is the addition of the word 'all' (omnium) in Text 18 (line 36). Although not in the *Symb. Ap.*, *Symb. Athan.*, or *Symb. N.-C.*, 'omnium' is found in many Spanish creeds: see Beatus and Heterius, *Adu. Elip.* I, 22 (p. 15, 572); BARLOW, *Martini Bracarenensis opera* (p. 197, 20); *Lib. ordin.* (col. 185, 13 and note 2, col. 185-186); and *Symb. Tol.* (p. 26, n. 65, 9 [and p. 152 for the related symbol of Worms]). T. 37, 182, also has 'omnium'.

Commentary on Text 18

An interesting feature of Text 18 is the acknowledgment that the creed can serve those who faithfully believe it and memorize it as a sort of apotropaic shield, a protective weapon against any fear that might overcome them. It does not mention the devil, or an external trial such as a disease or fire or drought, but only an internal fear one might acquire, regardless of its cause. In other words, here we do not quite have the creed being spoken of as some sort of magical amulet that you wear on your heart, but it is a close step for anyone to take these words in a miraculous, if not a superstitious, sense. Furthermore, Text 18 somewhat invites this sense by the inclusion of the word “immediately” (*statim*) and the use of the word “*sentiat*” (“*statim caelestem sentiat habere protectionem*”). It recalls the story of the miraculous healing of the woman with the hemorrhage in Mk. 5, 29-30: “And immediately the hemorrhage ceased; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. And immediately Jesus, perceiving in himself that power had gone out from him...” (*Et confestim siccatu est fons sanguinis eius: et sensit corpora quia sanata esset a plaga. Et statim Iesus in semetipso cognoscens uirtutem quae exierat de illo...*). Perhaps that is why the composer of this Text, or perhaps an editor of the Text has the word “spiritually” no less than three times, and also insists that the creed should not only be memorized, but held “faithfully”. Recall, too, that the word I translate “creed” is “*symbolum*”, and a “*symbolum*” in the Roman world had many applications, meaning simply a sign, a mark, a token, a symbol, so that it was necessary to explain to those entering the faith why the creed was called a symbol (over half of our Texts give a definition of the word “*symbolum*”, usually from Isidore). The “competents” were still pagans and if this sermon was

still in use for actual adult candidates, it would be presumed that they were coming from a world filled with superstitious rituals and signs. In fact, the creed as a magical formula could have a certain appeal to a pagan mindset, although Christians and Jews had protective formulas or signs (the sign of the cross; tomb inscriptions; Hebrew letters worn around the neck, the evil eye in front of baptisteries). The competents in Text 18 are told that they should memorize the creed “so that you can have heavenly protection at all times” (*ut caelestem protectionem per omnia habere possitis*). I translated *per omnia* as “at all times”, and it could also be translated “in every circumstance”, but however one translates it, this quality of the creed, which “has so much power of faith in itself” (*tantam in se habet fidei uirtutem*), to be at all times and everywhere a protection, may reflect a real attitude about the creed. That is, Carolingians viewed the creed like a relic. It was “holy” (one text repeatedly calls the creed “the holy creed”). For the vast majority of the people who did not speak or understand Latin, but who had to memorize these Latin words, why would they not seem a magic formula, like children today saying “abracadabra”? Efforts were certainly made to translate the creed into Old High German for the people (see Scherer, *Denkmaler*), but the numerous sermons like Text 18 that teach the creed in Latin, if these sermons were still used in the liturgy (or in schoolbooks for the education of potential pastors), indicate that the people were still being asked to memorize the creed in Latin.

In the Carolingian world, did the creed ever get used for apotropaic purposes? Well, it was recited at the death-bed of the dying person until they died, at least in some monastic communities. The idea is that it would keep the demons at bay who were vying with the angels for possession of the dying person’s soul.

Text 18 is known in only one ms, Karlsrule, BLB, Aug. perg. CCXXIX, between an. 806–822, Abruzzi or area of Chieti, 222 f.; 229 x 161 mm.; 22-26 lines, early Beneventan script of many hands, decorated letters and pictures.

Schoolbook.

- f. 1r-12r = Isidore, *Origines* VI, xix, xviii ("De officiis" and "De reliquis festiuitatibus");
- f. 12v-16r = "Incipit sinodus pascale ordinationi. cum omnes apostoli ex hoc mundo transissent – nobis iussa est caelaebrari. explicit synodus pascale";
- f. 16r-21r = Martin of Braga, *Opusculum 7: De pascha*;
- f. 21r-45v = calendar and geographical explanation; horologium;
- f. 46v-48v = letter falsely attrib. to Chromatius and Heliodorus to Jerome and response of Ps.-Jerome (on composing a martyrology = Preface I and II of Ps.-Jerome, *Martyrology*; *CPPM*, II A 518-520)); map of the world;
- f. 49r-53v = computus;
- f. 54r-57r = n. **132, 117a**;
- f. 57v-69v = computistical matter and *Chronica* attrib. to Jerome *CPL*, 1155f);
- f. 70v-183v = Isidore, *Allegoriae de libris ueteris et noui Testamenti; De ortu et obitu patrum; De natura rerum*;
- f. 184r = Generation of kings and nations, inc.: "Alaneus dictus est homo qui genuit tres filios"; historical notes about the destruction of cities by the Franks in an. 801 and 805;
- f. 184v-190v = tract on the assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, inc.: "Sancti dei genetrix";
- f. 191r-205r = Pope Leo I, *Breuiarium aduersus haereticos*;
- f. 205r-212v = Priscian, *Institutiones*, I, 1-23 (explanation of noun, pronoun, and verb);
- f. 212v-218r = prayers;
- f. 218r-220r = Athanasian Creed;
- f. 220r-221r = commentary on the Lord's Prayer, inc.: "Oratio dominica propria dicitur";
- f. 221v-222v = n. **143a**.

Text 18 (*Cat*, 132) is immediately followed by *Cat*, 117a, which is also a sermon to the competents. It is a CAP, and is essentially an excerpt from Ps. AVGVSTINVS, *Sermo 242. De symbolo VI: Ad competentes* (*Cat*, 168), beginning in the middle of c. 2 and ending in the middle of c. 4 (up to "sanctorum communionem"). But there are many small differences from the *PL* ed. If these differences are not due to a different tradition of Ps.-Augustine's Sermon 242, but are due to the ms compiler's own editorial work, this would strengthen the idea that he might have tinkered with Text 18 as well, and perhaps added the words "spiritually held" and "faithfully believed".