

<Text 14>

An Exposition on the Apostles' Creed of the Holy Bishop Fulgentius

(*Cat*, 86)

The Lord, who executes his sentence upon the earth with consummation and brevity (cfr Rm. 9, 28), just as he summed up in brevity all the precepts of the law, saying: on these two precepts of love of God and neighbor hang the whole law and the prophets (Mt. 22, 40); and just as in the brevity of his Prayer he summed up all that pertains to our assistance in the present life and to bringing about the life to come; thus also in the brevity of the creed he wished to be ordained through his apostles the complete contents of the holy faith, which would profit those believing rightly for their salvation. Indeed, the creed is a kind of true pact and true collation, in the brevity of which consists a summary of the entire Christian belief.

I BELIEVE IN GOD THE FATHER ALMIGHTY, CREATOR OF HEAVEN AND EARTH.¹ For when anyone says she believes in God the Father almighty, the very fact that she says 'in God the Father,' just as it shows the truth of God's natural divinity, also shows the truth of God's natural paternity, and from this also shows the truth of his natural begetting. For God the Father is not by nature God and not by nature Father, when indeed both divine paternity and paternal divinity is natural in him. Consequently, it has been sufficient that whatever was said about the Father alone, equally was to be understood in the Son. For the Father begot him as almighty, just as the Father himself is almighty; as creator of all things, just as the Father himself is the creator of all things. Therefore, everything that is attributed to God the Father in the creed is by nature attributed also to the Son, to the very one with the name of Son. For the creator of all

¹ *Symb. Ap.*

things is the Father, but *all things were made through the Word, and without him nothing was made* (Jn. 1, 3), and, *in him were created all things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers, all things were created through him and in him. He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together* (Col. 1, 16–17). *Thus there is one God the Father, from whom are all things and in whom we exist; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and in whom we exist* (1 Cor. 8, 6).

AND IN JESUS CHRIST HIS ONLY SON OUR LORD.² Although the divine nature is principally commended in the Father, next it is sufficient that our Lord Jesus Christ is called his only Son, since by the name itself of ‘only Son’ the full, natural communion of the Father and the Son is signified. It might be worthily believed that Jesus Christ was of another omnipotence, domination, immortality and invisibility, if he was not called the only Son of God the Father. But ‘only’ is said, because he alone is his true Son. Moreover, he alone is his true Son, because he alone is born from the nature of the Father. Thus, the truth of that nativity demonstrates the natural fullness of the Father in the Son, in whom, by natural generation, the fullness of the paternal nature remains.

WHO WAS BORN OF THE HOLY SPIRIT FROM THE VIRGIN MARY.³ It is in line with our faith and our salvation to confess the mystery not only of creation, but also of redemption. For in all the things that were said above about the Father, it was told of his majesty, by which he made us; but his goodness was not shown, by which he redeemed us. On account of this it was

² *Symb. Ap.*

³ cfr *Symb. Ap.*; this variation of the *Symb. Ap.* (which has ‘Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary; Qui conceptus est de Spiritu Sancto, natus ex Maria uirgine’) is found not only in Fulgentius, but also in Rufinus, *Symb.*, representing the creed of Aquileia, and in numerous other pre-Carolingian explanations of the creed.

necessary to impress more attentively and fully that the proper and only-begotten Son of God the Father almighty, immortal and invisible, true God, was also born of the Holy Spirit from the virgin Mary, which is nothing else than of the grace of God and from the virginal womb. What is more wonderful and health-giving than to know that God, only-begotten, born from the nature of the Father without beginning and by nature co-eternal to God the Father, not for any advantage to himself, but for obtaining our salvation, became what he made, and marvelously and mercifully was created, so that he might redeem what he created?

SUFFERED UNDER PONTIUS PILATE, WAS CRUCIFIED AND BURIED.⁴ The only Son of God himself, whom we confess was born of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary, we also say was crucified and buried, so that the truth of each nature together in him might be acknowledged. For just as the majesty of his eternal divinity shows he is true God, so the humility of his divine kindness teaches that he is true man. Indeed, that God who is from the Father, the creator of all things, from the virgin became the mediator of God and humans. Moreover, he himself would not have become a mediator if he did not have in his one self the truth of the paternal and the maternal substance. Just as in him *we have been reconciled through the death of his Son* (Rm. 5, 10) because that mediator had in himself true flesh according to which he had received true death, so in himself he brought to us the benefit of true reconciliation, because he has with the Father one natural divinity. For Christ, who is the truth, just as he is a true human from the nature of the mother, so he is also true God from the substance of the Father. Thus, for him there is no diversity of the divine nature with the Father, just as there is no diversity of the nature of soul and flesh with the virgin.

⁴ cfr *Symb. Ap.*

ON THE THIRD DAY HE ROSE AGAIN FROM THE DEAD.⁵ Because he received death in the truth of the flesh, which he absorbed in the truth of divinity, therefore we confess that after he was buried, he rose again on the third day. Divine kindness did this as a confirmation of our hope, so that in whom the punishment of our death was conquered, in the same one an example of our resurrection would shine brilliantly. And because *Christ, rising from the dead, no longer dies, and death no longer will have power over him* (Rm. 6, 9), just as the true flesh of Christ will never die, thus we believe that our bodies also, with the eternity of the resurrection, will prevail forever.

HE ASCENDED TO HEAVEN, SAT AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD THE FATHER ALMIGHTY, WHENCE HE WILL COME TO JUDGE THE LIVING AND THE DEAD.⁶ *For the Father judges no one, but he gave all judgment to the Son, so that all would honor the Son, just as they honor the Father* (Jn. 5, 22–23). Consequently, one is the honor that must be conferred to the Father and to the Son, because the Father, who judges no one, but gave all judgment to the Son, <has demonstrated that his judgment and the judgment of the Son are one; which judgment he gave to the Son,>⁷ so that all would honor the Son just as they honor the Father. Indeed, to remove the difference of honor, the oneness of judiciary power was <shown>⁸; that is, so that to the Son, to whom we know all judgment was given by the Father, we should confer equal honor together with the Father. Nor let us separate the obedience of honor where we do not see a separation of judgment.

⁵ *Symb. Ap.*

⁶ *cfr Symb. Ap.*

⁷ The ms omits what is in pointed brackets; I emended with Fulgentius.

⁸ The ms omits this word; I emended with Fulgentius.

AND IN THE HOLY SPIRIT.⁹ Having finished the confession of the true divinity and the true humanity of the only Son of God, we confess that we believe in the Holy Spirit, who is the one Spirit of the Father and the Son, proceeding from the Father and the Son, faithfully remaining in the Father and the Son, having the origin of its divinity from the Father and the Son, having with the Father and the Son the truth, by nature, of the one deity. This Trinity is the one God, whose mystery is contained in the holy creed, on account of which holy baptism is given in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

THE HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH, THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS, THE RESURRECTION OF THE FLESH, ETERNAL LIFE. AMEN.¹⁰ After the commemoration of the holy Trinity, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the flesh and eternal life is added in the creed, so that the advantage of that confession, by the addition of this reward, might be shown. Truly for this reason the faith of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, that is, of one eternal, true and good God, is advantageous, that we might receive forgiveness of sins and, rising again in this flesh in which we now live, we might live happily forever. This itself is *piety, which is of value in every way, holding promise for the present life and for the future life* (1 Tim. 4, 8); indeed, of a good present life, and of an eternal and blessed future life. Moreover, also 'the holy church' is added, so that what the house of the creator God, the eternal city of the redeemer, is might be known, without whose society and unity the forgiveness of sins is not acquired and one does not attain, through the resurrection of the flesh, the joys of eternal life, but the pains of eternal death. Consequently, the holy creed is of advantage to the one who believes the Father and the Son

⁹ cfr *Symb. Ap.*

¹⁰ cfr *Symb. Ap.*

and the Holy Spirit are in nature one God; for that one receives forgiveness of sins and, through the resurrection of the very flesh in which that one now lives well, will possess without doubt eternal life.¹¹

¹¹ For the entire text, cfr FVLG. RVSP., *C. Fab. frg. frg. 36* (p. 854-859, 4/14, 23/30, 32/36, 38/47, 101/116, 127/136, 140/165, 167/171, 172/183, 189/210)

Commentary of Text 14

When discussing the resurrection of the flesh/body in the creed, do my Texts show a preference for one or the other? (Richard Hays asked me about this.) The Apostles' Creed has "carnis resurrectionem." The N-C Creed has "resurrectionem mortuorum" (anastasin nekron). The Athanasian Creed has "Ad huius aduentum omnes homines resurgere habent cum [in] corporibus suis." Toledo XI (675) and XVI have resurrectionem mortuorum. Rufinus has "huius carnis resurrectionem." I found (from Denzinger-Schönmetzer) that a lot of the eastern (Greek) texts (Epiphanius, Ps.-Athanasius, Antioch at end 4th c., have anastasin nekron (resurrection of the dead). An Egyptian source of mid 4th c., has both: anastasin psukai kai somatos [vekron] (resurrection of the soul and body [dead]). In Greek you can have sarkos (flesh), somatos (body), or nekron (dead). Jerome uses (but not in a creed) "resurrection of the flesh and body as opposed to those (heretics) who believe only in the salvation of the soul." In our Texts, it is always "carnis resurrectionem" (the Apostles' Creed), except Text 25 (Cat, 189) which has "resurrectionem mortuorum" because it contains a creed-like summary with echoes of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed.

Were the Carolingian creed commentators aware of the difference between the AC's "carnis" and the N-C's "mortuorum"? That is, did they put any significance in it? (I can't think of a work that treats the difference between carnis and mortuorum, but check Augustine, Ambrose, Jerome, Gennadius.) Gennadius, Eccl. dogm., c. 6 and 7 refers to the symbol in which we say "carnis resurrectionem." He also talks about the "resurrectionem mortuorum," but his concern is to insist that all must die in order to resurrect (against another tradition that believes that the

people still living when the judgment day comes won't die, but just be changed). He quotes Acts 2, 31, "neque caro eius vidit corruptionem (nor did his flesh see corruption)"; it refers to Jesus, but maybe this line of Scripture is the origin of "carnis" in the Apostles' Creed? The exact phrase "resurrection of the dead" is in the NT a number of times: Acts 24, 21; 1 Cor. 15, 13; 1 Cor. 15, 42; Heb. 6, 2.