

HARTS STUDENT'S CATHOLIC DOCTRINE

CHAPTER VII

THE FIRST ARTICLE OF THE CREED

"I believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of Heaven and Earth."

THE UNITY AND TRINITY OF GOD.

God's Attributes

In this, the first Article of the Creed, we are taught to believe in one self-existent, all-perfect Being, the supreme Spirit who had no beginning, and who will never have an end; a Being possessing perfection in an infinite degree.

He is **omnipotent**, in that He possesses infinite power; He is **omniscient**, having a knowledge of all things, even of our most secret thoughts ; He is **omnipresent**, His presence reaching to every part of creation :

"Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy face? If I ascend into heaven, Thou art there; if I descend into hell, Thou art present. If I take my wings early in the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there also shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me" (Ps. cxxxviii. 7-10).

God, moreover, is infinitely wise, holy, and just; He is infinitely good, merciful, and true; infinitely amiable, faithful, and unchangeable. Independent Himself, all things depend upon Him for their very existence; His providence watches over all the works of His hand; He takes an exact account of our thoughts, words, and works; and, according as these are good or bad, He will mete out a just reward or punishment.

The Blessed Trinity

This infinite, all-perfect Being is one and single in nature: "*Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord*" (Deut.vi. 4); yet in the one Divine nature there are three Persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, each possessing certain personal qualities which cannot be attributed to the others.

Thus, the Father, the First Person of the adorable Trinity, proceeds from no one: this cannot be said of the Son or of the Holy Ghost. The Son, the Second Person, derives His origin from the Father by an eternal generation: "*Born of the Father from all eternity*": this cannot be said of the Father or of the Holy Ghost. The Third Person the Holy Ghost, proceeds—also from all eternity—from the Father and the Son as from a single principle: this cannot be said of the First or of the Second Person.

The Unity of God

Yet the Three Persons of the Blessed Trinity, though numerically distinct from one another, are consubstantial; that is, they have one and the same indivisible Divine nature and substance. The Father is truly God, the Son is truly God, the Holy Ghost is truly God—and yet these Three Persons are not three Gods, but one God, in every way equal. As to Persons, then, they are distinct; as to Substance, they are one— "*There are three that give testimony in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one*" (1 John v. 7)—consubstantial, co-eternal, and co-equal.

And though, in the language of Scripture, power and the work of Creation are attributed in a special manner to the Father, wisdom and the work of Redemption to the Son, holiness and the work of our Sanctification to the Holy Ghost, yet power and wisdom and holiness, and all the attributes of the Divine essence, except what constitutes the distinction of Persons, are common, and belong equally to the whole Trinity.

Our finite minds can never grasp this most sublime and profound of all mysteries; God alone, who is infinite, can comprehend Himself: it is enough for us to know that the Blessed Trinity has been revealed. It is the principal and fundamental doctrine of Christianity, and to deny it would be to reject the Catholic Faith.