

HART'S CATHOLIC DOCTRINE

CHAPTER XII

THE SECOND ARTICLE OF THE CREED

"And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord."

First Promise of a Redeemer

God then, did not leave our first parents without a gleam of hope, which greatly lightened the burden of their punishment, and comforted them in all their miseries. To the serpent He had said: "*I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed: she shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel*" (Gen. iii. 15). In these words we have the *first promise* of a Redeemer to come ; for it was by her seed, Jesus Christ, God the Son made man for us, that the woman was to crush the serpent's head. This promise and its frequent renewal kept up in the hearts of the people before the coming of the Messiah a longing desire for its fulfilment, and formed a great part of their religion: "*Amen, I say to you, many prophets and just men have desired to see the things that you see, and have not seen them; and to hear the things that you hear, and have not heard them*" (Matt. xiii. 17).

A Divine Redeemer Necessary

As man's offence was against a Being of infinite goodness and holiness, the debt which he incurred was one of infinite satisfaction to the offended majesty of God. But no merit of any mere creature could be sufficient to make such a satisfaction, since no creature, however exalted or holy, could offer more than a finite reparation. The Redemption, the reconciliation of fallen humanity with God offended by sin, needed a being capable of fully atoning for man's sin, and of restoring to man those supernatural gifts and graces that had once been his. For this atonement there was need a Mediator who should at the same time be both God and man—man, that He might be able to suffer and die for us; God, that an infinite merit might attach to any act of atonement He might will to make. Such a Redeemer, such a Mediator, was given to man by God, and He was none other than the INCARNATE Word, Jesus Christ, Second Person of the Blessed Trinity.

Christ the Mediator

Nor could mankind have been saved except by such a Mediator, because such a one alone, being God and man, was able to atone for the guilt of sin, and to re-establish that supernatural union between God and man which sin had destroyed. And although each and every action or suffering of our Saviour was of infinite value and sufficient to atone for man's guilt, yet His Heavenly Father willed that our Redemption should effected by the shedding of His most precious Blood, by His death upon the Cross: "*He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross*", Phil. ii. 8). "*He was wounded for our iniquities, He was bruised for our sins: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and by His bruises we are healed*" Isa. liii 5) .

Mystery of the Incarnation

To accomplish the work of our salvation, a sublime mystery way needed—the mystery of the Incarnation, the mystery of the Son of God made man for us. Faith teaches us that the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, having the same nature with God the Father, became also truly Man by taking a body and soul like ours: "*The Word was made flesh.*" God the Son became the Man Jesus Christ. We therefore believe that Jesus Christ is not only truly God, born of the Father from all

eternity, but is also truly Man, having been Man only from the time of His Incarnation—i.e., from the time of His taking flesh; that He assumed our human nature and united it to His Divine nature, yet so as to form but one Person: "*Being in the form of God, He thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and in habit found as a man*" (Phil. ii. 6, 7).

The Hypostatic Union

There are then *two natures* in Jesus Christ, the nature of God and the nature of man, and these two natures are inseparably united in the *one Person* of God the Son: "*In the beginning was the Word and the Word was God. . . And the Word was made flesh*" (John i. 1 and 14). As the soul and body are so united in man as to form but one person, so the Divine and human natures, by means of what is termed the *hypostatic* or *personal union*, constitute the one person of Jesus Christ, who is at the same time true God and true Man. Nor will the hypostatic union ever be dissolved. It was not broken even by death itself. As with us death means the separation of the soul from the body, so the death of Christ resulted from the separation of His soul from His body on the Cross. But when His sacred body lay in the tomb, the person of the Word still remained united to it, just as it remained united to His blessed soul in Limbo. When our Lord uses the words: "*I and the Father are one*" (John x. 30), He is speaking of His Divine nature; just as when speaking of Himself as man, He says: "*The Father is greater than I*" (John. xiv. 28).

Two wills in Jesus Christ

And as there are two complete natures in Jesus Christ, the Divine nature and the human nature, so also there are two wills distinct from each other, a Divine will and a human will; yet the human will is ever in perfect harmony with the Divine will. When, in His agony in the garden, His human nature dreaded all those sufferings which were then presented to His soul for His acceptance, and which in a few hours He to undergo, it was His human will which prompted Him to pray to be delivered from them: "*My Father, if be possible, let this chalice pass from Me.*" Yet notice at once He conformed to the good pleasure of the Divine will by presently adding: "*Nevertheless, not as I but as Thou wilt*" (Matt. xxvi. 39).

Where is Jesus Christ

From what has been said we see that Jesus Christ has not always been both God and Man. Before the time of His Incarnation the Son of God existed in the nature of God only; but since His Incarnation He exists in two natures, the same person being both God and Man. As God, He is everywhere; as God made Man, though sitting at the right hand of the Father in heaven, He is *nevertheless* present on earth in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. His promise, "*Behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world*" (Matt. xxviii. 20), He will ever make good by His Sacramental presence in the Holy Eucharist; by dwelling in the hearts of the faithful; and by His providential care and constant protection of His Holy Church, which He continually assists by the Holy Ghost. In the words of Father Schouppe, "*Christ is living. He lives always and everywhere, not only in heaven where He ascended, but in the entire world and in the minds and hearts of men. Since His death on Mount Calvary, He has more than ever shown Himself to be the living God, and His living power is specially shown and developed in Christianity; by it He speaks, He teaches, He commands, He forbids, He combats, and He triumphs. All passes and dies around Him; He alone lives and abides for ever, the Soul and the Chief of His Church.*" We the same idea beautifully summed up in the words of St Paul: "*Jesus Christ yesterday, and to-day, and the for ever*" (Heb. xiii. 8).