



Tracts for Our Times

I Believe in One God

A Short Commentary on the Creed: Parts 4-6

Tract 7

17/18 July
2010

We continue to offer you this commentary on the Creed which will take us systematically through this summary or 'symbol' of our faith.

4: I believe in the Father Almighty...

When we say God is 'Almighty', do we mean that He possesses the greatest power amongst a field of rivals? Is this our way of saying that God has no real competition?

God reveals Himself as '*the strong One, the mighty One*' (Psalm 24:8), as the One '*to whom nothing is impossible*' (Luke 1:37). His omnipotence is universal, mysterious and shows itself in the creation of the world out of nothing and humanity out of love; but above all it shows itself in the Incarnation and the Resurrection of His Son, in His adoption of us as His children and in the forgiveness of sins. For this reason, the Church directs her prayers to the '*Almighty and Eternal God*'.

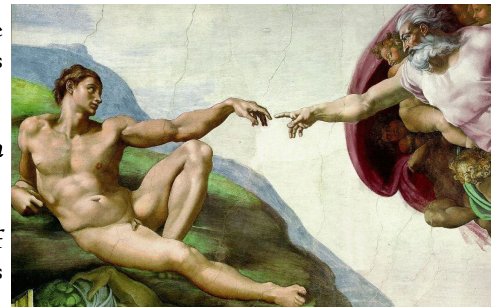
The almighty power of God is not simply greater than all the powers in the material universe. Rather, through His act of creation, all creatures live, move and have their being through the power of God.

The title of 'Almighty' for God, acknowledges God's creative power. The title is not 'Most mighty', as if something other than God could bring about life and being. To name God 'Almighty' reminds us that all strength and potency in the universe has its origin in God's own power and creative will.

Calling God 'Almighty', we marvel at the generosity of God in giving creatures His own strength, the better to serve Him.

5: ...*(The Father)* Maker of heaven and earth ...

To confess that God is the 'maker of heaven and earth' is to say everything that is owes its existence to the creative act of God.



Unlike a builder who constructs a wall that, once built, can stand without the his ongoing activity, God's is constantly sustaining the life of the universe. God creates me *now* as directly as He did at my conception. If God ever stopped creating, all things, no matter how long they had had being, would cease to exist. God holds all things in being.

Although creation is then an ongoing process, and we are still awaiting its perfection, the very fact that things 'are at all' is solely through God's action.

Anything that exists is either *God* or *God's creation*. Why does this have to be an article of faith, one may ask? Can't we see things around us, can't we touch and smell and taste? Isn't creation a matter of science rather than faith?

The significance is that creation is the *foundation of all God's saving plans*. It shows forth the almighty and wise love of God, and it is the first step toward the covenant of the one God with his people. *It is the beginning of the history of salvation which culminates in Christ*; and it is the first answer to our fundamental questions regarding our very origin and destiny.

Who created the world? The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are the One and indivisible principle of creation even though the work of *creating the world* is particularly attributed to God the Father. GOD created the world.

This revelation has always been interpreted (in the Christian tradition) through the opening verses of the Gospel of John: '*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made*' (John 1:1-3).

Why was the world created? The world was created for the glory of God who wished to show forth His goodness, truth and beauty. The ultimate end of creation is that God, in Christ, might be '*all in all*' (1 Corinthians 15:28) for His glory and for our happiness. St Irenaeus said that 'the glory of God is man fully alive; moreover man's life is the vision of God'. God made me to know Him, to love Him and to serve Him in this world and to be happy with him for ever in the next.

How did God create the universe? God created the universe freely with Wisdom and Love. The world is not the result of any necessity, nor of blind fate, nor of chance. God created 'out of nothing' (*ex nihilo*) (2 Maccabees 7:28) a world which is ordered and good and which He infinitely transcends. God preserves His creation in being and sustains it, giving it free will, while leading it toward its fulfillment through His Son and the Holy Spirit.

“ The world
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6: ... (The Father...the maker) of all things, visible and invisible ...

“all things”

Scripture says, ‘*In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth*’ (Genesis 1:1). God is the Creator of everything, visible and invisible, of all spiritual and corporeal (material) beings, that is, of angels and of the visible world and, in a special way, of man.

Everything that is not God is His Creation. God leads His creatures toward their ultimate end by “Divine Providence”. God is the sovereign Master of His own plan. To carry it out, however, He also makes use of the cooperation of his creatures who have free will: God grants His creatures the dignity of acting on their own and of being causes for each other.

While respecting our freedom, God asks us to cooperate with Him and gives us the ability to do so through actions, prayers and sufferings; awakening in us the desire ‘*to will and to work for his good pleasure*’ (Philippians 2:13).

If God is omnipotent and provident, why then does evil exist? To this question, as painful and mysterious as it is, only the whole of Christian faith can constitute a response. God is not in any way - directly or indirectly - the cause of evil. He illuminates the mystery of evil in His Son Jesus Christ who died and rose in order to vanquish that great moral evil, human sin, which is at the root of all other evils.

Evil exists because creatures with free will choose not to live as they were created to live, but according to their own desires, rejecting God and His Divine Providence.

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Why does God permit evil? Faith gives us the certainty that God would not permit evil if He did not cause a good to come from that very evil. This was realized in a wondrous way by God in the death and resurrection of Christ. In fact, from the greatest of all moral evils (the murder of His Son) He has brought forth the greatest of all goods (the glorification of Christ and our redemption).

“visible”

Through the account of the “six days” of creation (Genesis), Scripture teaches us the value of the created world and its purpose, namely, to praise God and to serve humanity. Every single thing owes its very existence to God from whom it receives its goodness and perfection, its proper laws and its proper place in the universe.

It tells us that everything that has been brought into being was done so by God and

is good, and that the human person is the summit of visible creation in as much as he or she is created in the image and likeness of God.

There is an interdependence and a hierarchy among creatures as willed by God. At the same time, there is also a unity and solidarity among creatures since all have the same Creator, are loved by Him and are ordered to His glory. Respecting the laws inscribed in creation and the relations which derive from the nature of things is, therefore, a principle of wisdom and a foundation for morality (NATURAL LAW).

The work of creation culminates in the still greater work of redemption, which in fact gives rise to a new creation in which everything will recover its true meaning and fulfillment.

“and invisible”

Where does the soul come from? The spiritual soul does not come from one’s parents, but is created immediately by God and is immortal. It does not perish at the moment when it is separated from the body in death and it will be once again reunited with the body at the moment of the final resurrection.

Who are the angels? The angels are purely spiritual creatures, incorporeal, invisible, immortal, and personal beings endowed with intelligence and will. They ceaselessly contemplate God face-to-face and they glorify Him. They serve Him and are His messengers in the accomplishment of His saving mission to all.

What was the fall of the angels? Satan and the other demons, about which Sacred Scripture and the Tradition of the Church speak, were angels, created good by God. They were, however, transformed into evil because with a free and irrevocable choice they rejected God and his Kingdom, thus giving rise to the existence of hell (absolute and permanent separation from God). They try to associate human beings with their revolt against God, but God has won in Christ a sure victory over the Evil One.

How should we understand the reality of sin? Sin is present in human history. This reality of sin can be understood clearly only in the light of divine revelation and above all in the light of Christ, the Saviour of all. Where sin abounded, He made grace to abound all the more. Like the angels, we exercise free will and choose for or against God. Unlike the angels who exercise this choice in eternity, our choice for or against God plays out in time as we live our earthly lives. ✠



“The following Tracts were published with the object of contributing something towards the practical revival of doctrines held by the great divines of our faith.”

This was the intention of Cardinal Newman and his companions (known as the Oxford Tractarians) when they began publishing their *Tracts for the Times*.

The Port Elizabeth Oratory, faithful to the Magisterium of the Catholic Church and the spirit of Saint Philip Neri, hope to contribute something to the faith and understanding of the People of God in Port Elizabeth, conforming their hearts and minds ever more closely to the Person of Jesus Christ.