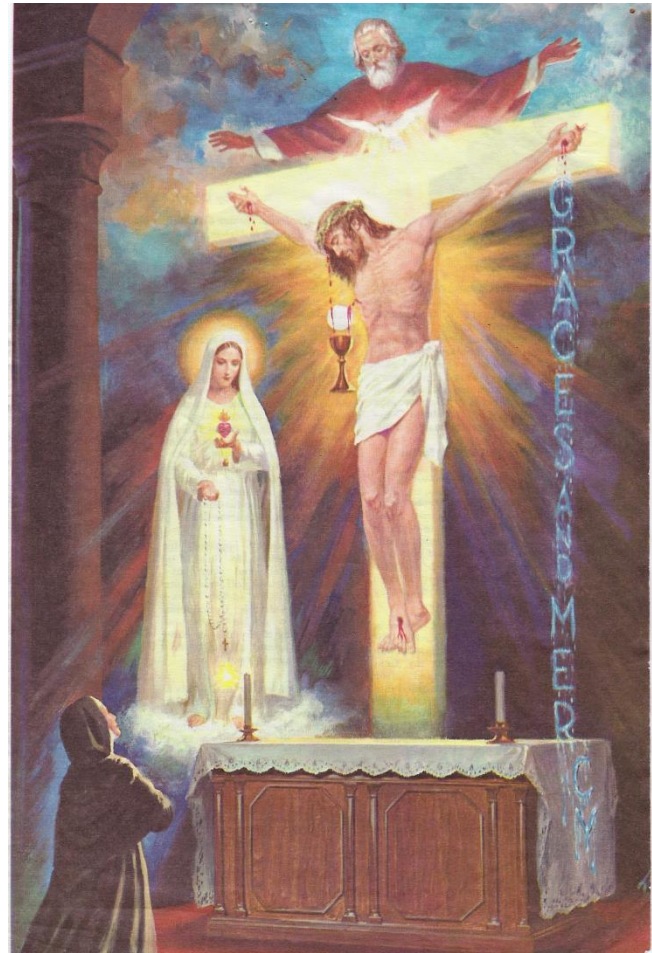


# **The Trinity**

June 2, 2013

# The Trinity

- The image seen by Sister Lucy, who was one of the three children of the apparition of Fatima. She was in the convent chapel and received this apparition of the Trinity and Mary.



# ***Benediction***

**Come Holy Spirit, Fill the hearts of thy  
Faithful and enkindle in them the fire of  
thy love...**

**Send forth thy spirit and thou shall  
renew the face of the Earth .**

# Instructions

- This presentation should be used along with access to the Internet
- Hyperlinks can take you to additional information

# The Trinity

- The Trinity is the term employed to signify the central doctrine of the Christian religion -- the truth that in the unity of the Godhead there are Three truly distinct Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

# The Creator

- God can variously be defined as:
- the proper name of the one Supreme and Infinite Personal Being, the Creator and Ruler of the universe, to whom man owes obedience and worship;
- the common or generic name of the several supposed beings to whom, in polytheistic religions, Divine attributes are ascribed and Divine worship rendered;
- the name sometimes applied to an idol as the image or dwelling-place of a god.
- The root-meaning of the name (from Gothic root *gheu*; Sanskrit *hub* or *emu*, "to invoke or to sacrifice to") is either "the one invoked" or "the one sacrificed to." From different Indo-Germanic roots (*div*, "to shine" or "give light"; *thes* in *thessasthai* "to implore") come the Indo-Iranian *deva*, Sanskrit *dyaus* (gen. *divas*), Latin *deus*, Greek *theos*, Irish and Gaelic *dia*, all of which are generic names; also Greek *Zeus* (gen. *Dios*, Latin *Jupiter* (*jovpater*), Old Teutonic *Tiu* or *Tiw* (surviving in *Tuesday*), Latin *Janus*, *Diana*, and other proper names of pagan deities. The common name most widely used in Semitic occurs as 'el in Hebrew, 'ilu in Babylonian, 'ilah in Arabic, etc.; and though scholars are not agreed on the point, the root-meaning most probably is "the strong or mighty one."

# God – the creator

- **Existence of God**

Formal dogmatic Atheism is self-refuting, and has never won the reasoned assent of any considerable number of men. Nor can Polytheism ever satisfy the mind of a philosopher. But there are several varieties of what may be described as virtual Atheism which cannot be dismissed so quickly.

- **Nature and Attributes of God**

In this article, we proceed by deductive analysis to examine the nature and attributes of God to the extent required by our limited philosophical scope. We will treat accordingly of the infinity, unity, and simplicity of God, adding some remarks on Divine personality.

- **Relation of God to the Universe**

The world is essentially dependent on God, and this dependence implies (1) that God is the Creator of the world -- the producer of its whole substance; and (2) that its continuance in being at every moment is due to His sustaining power.

# The Messiah

- The Greek form *Messias* is a transliteration of the Hebrew, *Messiah*, "the anointed". The word appears only twice of the promised prince (Daniel 9:26; Psalm 2:2); yet, when a name was wanted for the promised one, who was to be at once King and Savior, it was natural to employ this synonym for the royal title, denoting at the same time the King's royal dignity and His relation to [God](#). The full title "Anointed of Jahveh" occurs in several passages of the Psalms of Solomon and the Apocalypse of Baruch, but the abbreviated form, "Anointed" or "the Anointed", was in common use. When used without the article, it would seem to be a proper name. The word *Christos* so occurs in several passages of the Gospels. This, however, is no proof that the word was generally so used at that time. In the Palestine Talmud the form with the article is almost universal, while the common use in the Babylonian Talmud without the article is not a sufficient argument for antiquity to prove that in the time of Christ it was regarded as a proper name. It is proposed in the present article:
- I, to give an outline of the prophetic utterances concerning the Messiah;  
II, to show the development of the prophetic ideas in later Judaism; and  
III, to show how Christ vindicated His right to this title.



# THE MESSIAH OF PROPHECY

- The earlier prophecies to Abraham and Isaac (Genesis 18:17-19; 26:4-5) speak merely of the salvation that shall come through their seed. Later the royal dignity of the promised deliverer becomes the prominent feature. He is described as a king of the line of Jacob (Numbers 24:19), of Juda (Genesis 49:10: "The sceptre shall not pass from Juda until he comes to whom it belongs"), and of David (II Kings 7:11-16). It is sufficiently established that this last passage refers at least typically to the Messiah. His kingdom shall be eternal (II Kings 7:13), His sway boundless (Psalm 71:8); all nations shall serve Him (Psalm 71:11). In the type of prophecy we are considering, the emphasis is on His position as a national hero. It is to [Israel](#) and Juda that He will bring salvation (Jeremiah 23:6), triumphing over their enemies by force of arms (cf. the warrior-king of Psalm 45). Even in the latter part of Isaias there are passages (e.g. 61:5-8) in which other nations are regarded as sharing in the kingdom rather as servants than as heirs, while the function of the Messiah is to lift up Jerusalem to its glory and lay the foundations of an [Israelitic](#) theocracy.
- But in this part of Isaias also occurs the splendid conception of the Messiah as the Servant of Jahveh. He is a chosen arrow, His mouth like a sharp sword. The Spirit of the Lord is poured out upon Him, and His word is put into His mouth (42:1; 49:1 sq.). The instrument of His power is the revelation of Jahveh. The nations wait on His teaching; He is the light of the Gentiles (42:6). He establishes His Kingdom not by manifestation of material power, but by meekness and suffering, by obedience to the command of [God](#) in laying down His life for the salvation of many. "If he shall lay down his life for sin, he shall see a posterity and prolong his days" (53:10); "Therefore will I distribute to him very many, and he shall divide the spoils of the strong, because he hath delivered his soul unto death, and was reputed with the wicked" (53:12). His Kingdom shall consist of the multitude redeemed by His vicarious satisfaction, a satisfaction confined to no race or time but offered for the redemption of all alike. (For the Messianic application of these passages, especially Isaiah 52:13 to 53, cf. Condamin or Knabenbauer, in loc.) In spite, however, of [Justin's](#) use of the last-mentioned passage in "Dial. cum Tryphone", 89, it would be rash to affirm that its reference to the Messiah was at all widely realized among the Jews. In virtue of his prophetic and priestly offices the title of "the Anointed" naturally belonged to the promised one. The Messianic priest is described by David in Psalm 109, with reference to Genesis 14:14-20. That this psalm was generally understood in a Messianic sense is not disputed, while the universal consent of the Fathers puts the matter beyond question for Catholics. As regards its Davidic authorship, the arguments impugning it afford no warrant for an abandonment of the traditional view. That by the prophet described in Deuteronomy 18:15-22, was also understood, at least at the beginning of our era, the Messiah is clear from the appeal to his gift of prophecy made by the pseudo-Messiah Theudas (cf. Josephus, "Antiq.", XX, v. 1) and the use made of the passage by St. Peter in Acts 3:22-23.

- Special importance attaches to the prophetic description of the Messiah contained in Daniel 7, the great work of later Judaism, on account of its paramount influence upon one line of the later development of Messianic Doctrine. In it the Messiah is described as "like to a [Son of Man](#)", appearing at the right hand of Jahveh in the clouds of heaven, inaugurating the new age, not by a national victory or by vicarious satisfaction, but by exercising the Divine right of judging the whole world. Thus, the emphasis is upon the personal responsibility of the individual. The consummation is not an earth-won ascendancy of the chosen people, whether shared with other nations or not, but a vindication of the holy by the solemn judgment of Jahveh and his Anointed One. Upon this prophecy were mainly based the various apocalyptic works which played so prominent a part in the religious life of the Jews during the last two centuries before Christ. Side by side with all these prophecies speaking of the establishment of a kingdom under the sway of a divinely-appointed legate, was the series foretelling the future rule of Jahveh himself. Of these Is., xl, may be taken as an example: "Lift up thy voice with strength thou that bringest good tidings to Sion: lift it up, fear not. Say to the cities of Juda: Behold your [God](#). Behold the [Lord your God](#) himself shall come with strength and his arm shall rule." The reconciliation of these two series of prophecies was before the Jews in the passages--notably Ps. ii and Is., vii-xi--which clearly foretold the Divinity of the promised legate. "His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, [God the Mighty](#), the Father of the world to come, the Prince of Peace"--titles all used elsewhere of Jahveh Himself (cf. Davidson, "O.T. Prophecy", p. 367). But there seems to have been little realization of the relation between these two series of prophecy until the full light of the [Christian dispensation](#) revealed their reconciliation in the mystery of the Incarnation.

# The Spirit

- The doctrine of the [Catholic Church](#) concerning the Holy Ghost forms an integral part of her teaching on the [mystery](#) of the [Holy Trinity](#), of which [St. Augustine](#) (De Trin., I, iii, 5), speaking with diffidence, says: "In no other subject is the danger of erring so great, or the progress so difficult, or the fruit of a careful study so appreciable". The essential points of the dogma may be resumed in the following propositions:
- The Holy Ghost is the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity.
- Though really distinct, as a Person, from the Father and the Son, He is consubstantial with Them; being [God](#) like Them, He possesses with Them one and the same Divine Essence or Nature.
- He proceeds, not by way of generation, but by way of spiration, from the Father and the Son together, as from a single principle.
- Such is the belief the Catholic faith demands.

# CHIEF ERRORS

- All the theories and all the [Christian](#) sects that have contradicted or impugned, in any way, the dogma of the Trinity, have, as a logical consequence, threatened likewise the faith in the Holy Ghost. Among these, history mentions the following:
- In the second and third centuries, the dynamic or modalistic [Monarchians](#) (certain [Ebionites](#), it is said, Theodotus of Byzantium, [Paul of Samosata](#), Praxeas, Noëtus, Sabellius, and the Patripassians generally) held that the same Divine Person, according to His different operations or manifestations, is in turn called the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; so they recognized a purely nominal Trinity.
- In the fourth century and later, the [Arians](#) and their numerous heretical offspring: Anomans or [Eunomians](#), [Semi-Arians](#), [Acacians](#), etc., while admitting the triple personality, denied the consubstantiality. [Arianism](#) had been preceded by the Subordination theory of some ante-Nicene writers, who affirmed a difference and a gradation between the Divine Persons other than those that arise from their relations in point of origin.
- In the sixteenth century, the [Socinians](#) explicitly rejected, in the name of reason, along with all the [mysteries](#) of [Christianity](#), the doctrine of [Three Persons in One God](#).
- Mention may also be made of the teachings of Johannes Philoponus (sixth century), Roscellinus, [Gilbert de la Porrée](#), [Joachim of Flora](#) (eleventh and twelfth centuries), and, in modern times, [Günther](#), who, by denying or obscuring the doctrine of the numerical unity of the Divine Nature, it reality set up a triple deity.
- In addition to these systems and these writers, who came in conflict with the true doctrine about the Holy Ghost only indirectly and as a logical result of previous errors, there were others who attacked the truth directly:
- Towards the middle of the fourth century, Macedonius, Bishop of Constantinople, and, after him a number of [Semi-Arians](#), while apparently admitting the Divinity of the Word, denied that of the Holy Ghost. They placed Him among the spirits, inferior ministers of [God](#), but higher than the [angels](#). They were, under the name of [Pneumatomachians](#), condemned by the [Council of Constantinople](#), in 381 (Mansi, III, col. 560).
- Since the days of Photius, the schismatic Greeks maintain that the Holy Ghost, [true God](#) like the Father and the Son, proceeds from the former alone.

# THE THIRD PERSON OF THE BLESSED TRINITY

- This heading implies two truths:
- The Holy Ghost is a Person really distinct as such from the Father and the Son;
- He is [God](#) and consubstantial with the Father and the Son.
- The first statement is directly opposed to Monarchianism and to [Socinianism](#); the second to Subordinationism, to the different forms of [Arianism](#), and to Macedonianism in particular. The same arguments drawn from Scripture and Tradition may be used generally to prove either assertion. We will, therefore, bring forward the proofs of the two truths together, but first call particular attention to some passages that demonstrate more explicitly the distinction of personality.
- **A. Scripture.** In the New Testament the word *spirit* and, perhaps, even the expression *spirit of God* signify at times the soul or man himself, inasmuch as he is under the influence of [God](#) and aspires to things above; more frequently, especially in [St. Paul](#), they signify [God](#) acting in man; but they are used, besides, to designate not only a working of [God](#) in general, but a Divine Person, Who is neither the Father nor the Son, Who is named together with the Father, or the Son, or with Both, without the context allowing them to be identified. A few instances are given here. We read in John, xiv, 16, 17: "And I will ask the Father, and he shall give you another Paraclete, that he may abide with, you for ever. The spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive"; and in John, xv, 26: "But when the Paraclete cometh, whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceedeth from the Father, he shall give testimony of me." St. Peter addresses his first epistle, i, 1-2, "to the strangers dispersed . . . elect, according to the foreknowledge of [God](#) the Father, unto the sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of [Jesus Christ](#)". The Spirit of consolation and of truth is also clearly distinguished in John 16:7, 13-15, from the Son, from Whom He receives all He is to teach the Apostles, and from the Father, who has nothing that the Son also does not possess. Both send Him, but He is not separated from Them, for the Father and the Son come with Him when He descends into our souls (John 14:23).

- Many other texts declare quite as clearly that the Holy Ghost is a Person, a Person distinct from the Father and the Son, and yet [One God](#) with Them. In several places [St. Paul](#) speaks of Him as if speaking of [God](#). In Acts 28:25, he says to the Jews: "Well did the Holy Ghost speak to our fathers by Isaias the prophet"; now the prophecy contained in the next two verses is taken from Isaias 6:9-10, where it is put in the mouth of the "King the Lord of hosts". In other places he uses the words *God* and *Holy Ghost* as plainly synonymous. Thus he writes, I Corinthians 3:16: "Know you not, that you are the temple of [God](#), and that the [Spirit of God](#) dwelleth in you?" and in 6:19: "Or know you not, that your members are the temple of the Holy Ghost, who is in you . . . ?" St. Peter asserts the same identity when he thus remonstrates with Ananias (Acts 5:3-4): "Why hath [Satan](#) tempted thy heart, that thou shouldst lie to the Holy Ghost . . . ? Thou hast not lied to men, but to [God](#)." The sacred writers attribute to the Holy Ghost all the works characteristic of Divine power. It is in His name, as in the name of the Father and of the Son, that baptism is to be given (Matt. xxviii, 19). It is by His operation that the greatest of [Divine mysteries](#), the Incarnation of the Word, is accomplished (Matthew 1:18, 20; Luke 1:35). It is also in His name and by His power that sins are forgiven and souls sanctified: "Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them" (John 20:22-23); "But you are washed, but you are sanctified, but you are justified in the name of [our Lord Jesus Christ](#), and the [Spirit of our God](#)" (I Corinthians 6:11); "The charity of [God](#) is poured forth in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost, who is given to us" (Romans 5:5). He is essentially the Spirit of truth (John 14:16-17; 15:26), Whose office it is to strengthen faith (Acts 6:5), to bestow wisdom (Acts 6:3), to give testimony of Christ, that is to say, to confirm His teaching inwardly (John 15:26), and to teach the Apostles the full meaning of it (John 14:26; 16:13). With these Apostles He will abide for ever (John 14:16). Having descended on them at Pentecost, He will guide them in their work (Acts 8:29), for He will inspire the new prophets (Acts 11:28; 13:9), as He inspired the Prophets of the Old Law (Acts 7:51). He is the source of graces and gifts (I Corinthians 12:3-11); He, in particular, grants the gift of tongues (Acts 2:4; 10:44-47). And as he dwells in our bodies sanctifies them (I Corinthians 3:16; 6:19), so will and them he raise them again, one day, from the dead (Romans 8:11). But he operates especially in the soul, giving it a new life (Romans 8:9 sq.), being the pledge that [God](#) has given us that we are his children (Romans 8:14-16; II Corinthians 1:22; 5:5; Galatians 4:6). He is the [Spirit of God](#), and at the same time the Spirit of Christ (Romans 8:9); because He is in [God](#), He knows the deepest [mysteries](#) of [God](#) (I Corinthians 2:10-11), and He possesses all knowledge. [St. Paul](#) ends his Second Epistle to the Corinthians (13:13) with this formula of benediction, which might be called a blessing of the Trinity: "The grace of [our Lord Jesus Christ](#), and the charity of [God](#), and the communication of the Holy Ghost be with you all." -- Cf. Tixeront, "Hist. des dogmes", Paris, 1905, I, 80, 89, 90, 100, 101.



- **Tradition.** While corroborating and explaining the testimony of Scripture, Tradition brings more clearly before us the various stages of the evolution of this doctrine.
- As early as the first century, [St. Clement of Rome](#) gives us important teaching about the Holy Ghost. His "Epistle to the Corinthians" not only tells us that the Spirit inspired and guided the holy writers (viii, 1; xlv, 2); that He is the voice of [Jesus Christ](#) speaking to us in the Old Testament (xxii, 1 sq.); but it contains further, two very explicit statements about the Trinity. In c. xlvi, 6 (Funk, "Patres apostolici", 2nd ed., I, 158), we read that "we have only one [God](#), one Christ, one only Spirit of grace within us, one same vocation in Christ". In lviii, 2 (Funk, ibid., 172), the author makes this solemn affirmation; *zo gar ho theos, kai zo ho kyrios Iesous Christos kai to pneuma to hagion, he te pistis kai he elpis ton eklekton, oti . . .* which we may compare with the formula so frequently met with in the Old Testament: *zo kyrios*. From this it follows that, in Clement's view, *kyrios* was equally applicable to *ho theos* (the Father), *ho kyrios Iesous Christos*, and *to pneuma to hagion*; and that we have three witnesses of equal authority, whose Trinity, moreover, is the foundation of [Christian](#) faith and hope.
- The same doctrine is declared, in the second and third centuries, by the lips of the martyrs, and is found in the writings of the Fathers. [St. Polycarp](#) (d. 155), in his torments, thus professed his faith in the Three Adorable Persons ("Martyrium sancti Polycarpi" in Funk op. cit., I, 330): "[Lord God Almighty](#), Father of Thy blessed and well beloved Son, [Jesus Christ](#) . . . in everything I praise Thee, I bless Thee, I glorify Thee by the eternal and celestial pontiff [Jesus Christ](#), Thy well beloved Son, by whom, to Thee, with Him and with the Holy Ghost, glory now and for ever!"
- St. Epipodius spoke more distinctly still (Ruinart, "Acta mart.", Verona edition, p. 65): "I confess that Christ is [God](#) with the Father and the Holy Ghost, and it is fitting that I should give back my soul to Him Who is my Creator and my Redeemer."

- Among the apologists, [Athenagoras](#) mentions the Holy Ghost along with, and on the same plane as, the Father and the Son. "Who would not be astonished", says he (Legat. pro christian., n. 10, in P.G., VI, col. 909), "to hear us called [atheists](#), us who confess [God the Father](#), [God the Son](#) and the Holy Ghost, and hold them one in power and distinct in order [*. . . ten en te henosei dynamin, kai ten en te taxei diairesin*]?"
- [Theophilus of Antioch](#), who sometimes gives to the Holy Ghost, as to the Son, the name of *Wisdom* (*sophia*), mentions besides (Ad Autol., lib. I, n. 7, and II, n. 18, in P.G., VI, col. 1035, 1081) the three terms *theos*, *logos*, *sophia* and, being the first to apply the characteristic word that was afterwards adopted, says expressly (ibid., II, 15) that they form a *trinity* (*trias*).
- [Irenæus](#) looks upon the Holy Ghost as eternal (Adv. Hær., V, xii, n. 2, in P.G., VII, 1153), existing in [God](#) *ante omnem constitutionem*, and produced by him at the beginning of His ways (ibid., IV, xx, 3). Considered with regard to the Father, the Holy Ghost is his wisdom (IV, xx, 3); the Son and He are the "two hands" by which [God](#) created man (IV, præf., n. 4; IV, xx, 20; V, vi, 1). Considered with regard to the [Church](#), the same Spirit is truth, grace, a pledge of immortality, a principle of union with [God](#); intimately united to the [Church](#), He gives the sacraments their efficacy and virtue (III, xvii, 2, xxiv, 1; IV, xxxiii, 7; V, viii, 1).
- [St. Hippolytus](#), though he does not speak at all clearly of the Holy Ghost regarded as a distinct person, supposes him, however, to be [God](#), as well as the Father and the Son (Contra Noët., viii, xii, in P.G., X, 816, 820).
- [Tertullian](#) is one of the writers of this age whose tendency to Subordinationism is most apparent, and that in spite of his being the author of the definitive formula: "Three persons, one substance". And yet his teaching on the Holy Ghost is in every way remarkable. He seems to have been the first among the Fathers to affirm His Divinity in a clear and absolutely precise manner. In his work "Adversus Praxeas" he dwells at length on the greatness of the Paraclete. The Holy Ghost, he says, is [God](#) (c. xiii in P.L., II, 193); of the substance of the Father (iii, iv in P.L., II, 181-2); one and the same [God](#) with the Father and the Son (ii in P.L., II, 180); proceeding from the Father through the Son (iv, viii in P.L., II, 182, 187); teaching all truth (ii in P.L., II, 179).



- [St. Gregory Thaumaturgus](#), or at least the *Ekthesis tes pisteos*, which is commonly attributed to him, and which dates from the period 260-270, gives us this remarkable passage (P.G., X, 933 sqq.): "One is [God](#), Father of the living Word, of the subsisting Wisdom. . . . One the Lord, one of one, [God](#) of [God](#), invisible of invisible. . . . One the Holy Ghost, having His subsistence from [God](#). . . . Perfect Trinity, which in eternity, glory, and power, is neither divided, nor separated. . . . Unchanging and immutable Trinity."
- In 304, the martyr [St. Vincent](#) said (Ruinart, op. cit., 325): "I confess the [Lord Jesus Christ](#), Son of the Father most High, one of one; I recognize Him as one [God](#) with the Father and the Holy Ghost."
- But we must come down towards the year 360 to find the doctrine on the Holy Ghost explained both fully and clearly. It is [St. Athanasius](#) who does so in his "Letters to Serapion" (P.G., XXVI, col. 525 sq.). He had been informed that certain [Christians](#) held that the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity was a creature. To refute them he questions the Scriptures, and they furnish him with arguments as solid as they are numerous. They tell him, in particular, that the Holy Ghost is united to the Son by relations just like those existing between the Son and the Father; that He is sent by the Son; that He is His mouth-piece and glorifies Him; that, unlike creatures, He has not been made out of nothing, but comes forth from [God](#); that He performs a sanctifying work among men, of which no creature is capable; that in possessing Him we possess [God](#); that the Father created everything by Him; that, in fine, He is immutable, has the attributes of immensity, oneness, and has a right to all the appellations that are used to express the dignity of the Son. Most of these conclusions he supports by means of Scriptural texts, a few from amongst which are given above. But the writer lays special stress on what is read in Matthew 28:19. "The Lord", he writes (Ad Serap., III, n. 6, in P.G., XXVI, 633 sq.), "founded the Faith of the [Church](#) on the Trinity, when He said to His Apostles: 'Going therefore, teach ye all nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.' If the Holy Ghost were a creature, Christ would not have associated Him with the Father; He would have avoided making a heterogeneous Trinity, composed of unlike elements. What did [God](#) stand in need of? Did He need to join to Himself a being of different nature? . . . No, the Trinity is not composed of the Creator and the creature."

- A little later, [St. Basil](#), [Didymus of Alexandria](#), St. Epiphanius, [St. Gregory of Nazianzus](#), [St. Ambrose](#), and [St. Gregory of Nyssa](#) took up the same thesis *ex professo*, supporting it for the most part with the same proofs. All these writings had prepared the way for the [Council of Constantinople](#) which, in 381, condemned the [Pneumatomachians](#) and solemnly proclaimed the true doctrine. This teaching forms part of the Creed of Constantinople, as it is called, where the symbol refers to the Holy Ghost, "Who is also our Lord and Who gives life; Who proceeds from the Father, Who is adored and glorified together with the Father and the Son; Who spoke by the prophets". Was this creed, with these particular words, approved by the [council of 381](#)? Formerly that was the common opinion, and even in recent times it has been held by authorities like [Hefele](#), [Hergenröther](#), and [Funk](#); other historians, amongst whom are Harnack and Duchesne, are of the contrary opinion; but all agree in admitting that the creed of which we are speaking was received and approved by the [Council of Chalcedon](#), in 451, and that, at least from that time, it became the official formula of Catholic orthodoxy.

# PROCESSION OF THE HOLY GHOST

- We need not dwell at length on the precise meaning of the *Procession* in [God](#). (See [TRINITY](#).) It will suffice here to remark that by this word we mean the relation of origin that exists between one Divine Person and another, or between one and the two others as its principle of origin. The Son proceeds from the Father; the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father and the Son. The latter truth will be specially treated here.
- **A.** That the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father has always been admitted by all [Christians](#); the truth is expressly stated in John, xv, 26. But the Greeks, after Photius, deny that He proceeds from the Son. And yet such is manifestly the teaching of Holy Scripture and the Fathers.
- (1) *In the New Testament*
- (a) The Holy Ghost is called the Spirit of Christ (Romans 8:9), the Spirit of the Son (Galatians 4:6), the Spirit of [Jesus](#) (Acts 16:7). These terms imply a relation of the Spirit to the Son, which can only be a relation of origin. This conclusion is so much the more indisputable as all admit the similar argument to explain why the Holy Ghost is called the Spirit of the Father. Thus [St. Augustine](#) argues (In Joan., tr. xcix, 6, 7 in P.L., XXXV, 1888): "You hear the Lord himself declare: 'It is not you that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you'. Likewise you hear the Apostle declare: '[God](#) hath sent the Spirit of His Son into your hearts. Could there then be two spirits, one the spirit of the Father, the other the spirit of the Son? Certainly not. Just as there is only one Father, just as there is only one Lord or one Son, so there is only one Spirit, Who is, consequently, the Spirit of both. . . Why then should you refuse to believe that He proceeds also from the Son, since He is also the Spirit of the Son? If He did not proceed from Him, [Jesus](#), when He appeared to His disciples after His [Resurrection](#), would not have breathed on them, saying: 'Receive ye the Holy Ghost'. What, indeed, does this breathing signify, but that the Spirit proceeds also from Him?" St. Athanasius had argued in exactly the same way (De Trinit. et Spir. S., n. 19, in P.G., XXVI, 1212), and concluded: "We say that the [Son of God](#) is also the source of the Spirit."

- (b) The Holy Ghost *receives* from the Son, according to John 16:13-15: "When he, the Spirit of truth, is come he will teach you all truth. For he shall not speak of himself; but what things soever he shall hear, he shall speak; and the things that are to come, he shall shew you. He shall glorify me; because he shall receive of mine, and shall shew *it* to you. All things whatsoever the Father hath, are mine. Therefore I said, that he shall receive of mine, and shew *it* to you." Now, one Divine Person can receive from another only by Procession, being related to that other as to a principle. What the Paraclete will receive from the Son is immanent knowledge, which He will afterwards manifest exteriorly. But this immanent knowledge is the very essence of the Holy Ghost. The latter, therefore, has His origin in the Son, the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Son. "He shall not speak of Himself", says [St. Augustine](#) (In Joan., tr. xcix, 4, in P.L., XXXV, 1887), "because He is not from Himself, but He shall tell you all He shall have heard. He shall hear from him from whom He proceeds. In His case, to hear is to know, and to know is to be. He derives His knowledge from Him from Whom He derives His essence." St. Cyril of Alexandria remarks that the words: "He shall receive of mine" signify "the nature" which the Holy Ghost has from the Son, as the Son has His from the Father (De Trinit., dialog. vi, in P.G., LXXV, 1011). Besides, [Jesus](#) gives this reason of His assertion: "He shall receive of mine": "All things whatsoever the Father hath, are mine. Now, since the Father has with regard to the Holy Ghost the relation we term Active Spiration, the Son has it also; and in the Holy Ghost there exists, consequently, with regard to both, Passive Spiration or Procession.

- (2) *The same truth has been constantly held by the Fathers*
- This fact is undisputed as far as the Western Fathers are concerned; but the Greeks deny it in the case of the Easterns. We will cite, therefore, a few witnesses from among the latter. The testimony of St. Athanasius has been quoted above, to the effect that "the Son is the source of the Spirit", and the statement of Cyril of Alexandria that the Holy Ghost has His "nature" from the Son. The latter saint further asserts (Thesaur., assert. xxxiv in P.G., LXXV, 585); "When the Holy Ghost comes into our hearts, He makes us like to [God](#), because He proceeds from the Father and the Son"; and again (Epist., xvii, Ad Nestorium, De excommunicatione in P.G., LXXVII, 117): "The Holy Ghost is not unconnected with the Son, for He is called the Spirit of Truth, and Christ is the Truth; so He proceeds from Him as well as from [God the Father](#)." St. Basil (De Spirit. S., xviii, in P.G., XXXII, 147) wishes us not to depart from the traditional order in mentioning the Three Divine Persons, because "as the Son is to the Father, so is the Spirit to the Son, in accordance with the ancient order of the names in the formula of baptism". St. Epiphanius writes (Ancor., viii, in P. G., XLIII, 29, 30) that the Paraclete "is not to be considered as unconnected with the Father and the Son, for He is with Them one in substance and divinity", and states that "He is from the Father and the Son"; a little further, he adds (op. cit., xi, in P.G., XLIII, 35): "No one knows the Spirit, besides the Father, except the Son, from Whom He proceeds and of Whom He receives." Lastly, a council held at Seleucia in 410 proclaims its faith "in the Holy Living Spirit, the Holy Living Paraclete, Who proceeds from the Father and the Son" (Lamy, "Concilium Seleuciæ", Louvain, 1868).

- However, when we compare the Latin writers, as a body, with the Eastern writers, we notice a difference in language: while the former almost unanimously affirm that the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father and *from* the Son, the latter generally say that He proceeds from the Father *through* the Son. In reality the thought expressed by both Greeks and Latins is one and the same, only the manner of expressing it is slightly different: the Greek formula *ek tou patros dia tou ouiou* expresses directly the order according to which the Father and the Son are the principle of the Holy Ghost, and implies their equality as principle; the Latin formula expresses directly this equality, and implies the order. As the Son Himself proceeds from the Father, it is from the Father that He receives, with everything else, the virtue that makes Him the principle of the Holy Ghost. Thus, the Father alone is *principium absque principio, aitia anarchos prokatarktike*, and, comparatively, the Son is an intermediate principle. The distinct use of the two prepositions, *ek* (from) and *dia* (through), implies nothing else. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the Greek theologians Blemmidus Beccus, Calecas, and Bessarion called attention to this, explaining that the two particles have the same signification, but that *from* is better suited to the First Person, Who is the source of the others, and *through* to the Second Person, Who comes from the Father. Long before their time St. Basil had written (De Spir. S., viii, 21, in P.G., XXXII, 106): "The expression *di ou* expresses acknowledgment of the primordial principle [ *tes prokatarktikas aitas* ]"; and [St. Chrysostom](#) (Hom. v in Joan., n. 2, in P.G., LIX, 56): "If it be said *through Him*, it is said solely in order that no one may imagine that the Son is not generated": It may be added that the terminology used by the Eastern and Western writers, respectively, to express the idea is far from being invariable. Just as Cyril, Epiphanius, and other Greeks affirm the Procession *ex utroque*, so several Latin writers did not consider they were departing from the teaching of [their Church](#) in expressing themselves like the Greeks. Thus [Tertullian](#) (Contra Prax., iv, in P.L., II, 182): "Spiritus non aliunde puto quam a Patre per Filium"; and St. Hilary (De Trinit., lib., XII, n. 57, in P.L., X, 472), addressing himself to the Father, protests that he wishes to adore, with Him and the Son "Thy Holy Spirit, Who comes from Thee through thy only Son". And yet the same writer had said, a little higher (op. cit., lib. II, 29, in P.L., X, 69), "that we must confess the Holy Ghost coming from the Father and the Son", a clear proof that the two formulæ were regarded as substantially equivalent.

- **B.** Proceeding both from the Father and the Son, the Holy Ghost, nevertheless, proceeds from Them as from a single principle. This truth is, at the very least insinuated in the passage of John, xvi, 15 (cited above), where Christ establishes a necessary connection between His own sharing in all the Father has and the Procession of the Holy Ghost. Hence it follows, indeed, that the Holy Ghost proceeds from the two other Persons, not in so far as They are distinct, but inasmuch as Their Divine perfection is numerically one. Besides, such is the explicit teaching of ecclesiastical tradition, which is concisely put by [St. Augustine](#) (De Trin., lib. V, c. xiv, in P.L., XLII, 921): "As the Father and the Son are only one [God](#) and, relatively to the creature, only one Creator and one Lord, so, relatively to the Holy Ghost, They are only one principle." This doctrine was defined in the following words by the [Second Ecumenical Council of Lyons](#) [Denzinger, "Enchiridion" (1908), n. 460]: "We confess that the Holy Ghost proceeds eternally from the Father and the Son, not as from two principles, but as from one principle, not by two spirations, but by one single spiration." The teaching was again laid down by the Council of Florence (ibid., n. 691), and by Eugene IV in his Bull "Cantate Domino" (ibid., n. 703 sq.).



- **C.** It is likewise an article of faith that the Holy Ghost does not proceed, like the Second Person of the Trinity, by way of generation. Not only is the Second Person alone called *Son* in the Scriptures, not only is He alone said to be *begotten*, but He is also called the *only Son of God*; the ancient symbol that bears the name of Saint Athanasius states expressly that "the Holy Ghost comes from the Father and from the Son not made not created, not generated, but proceeding ". As we are utterly incapable of otherwise fixing the meaning of the [mysterious](#) mode affecting this relation of origin, we apply to it the name *spiration*, the signification of which is principally negative and by way of contrast, in the sense that it affirms a Procession peculiar to the Holy Ghost and exclusive of filiation. But though we distinguish absolutely and essentially between generation and spiration, it is a very delicate and difficult task to say what the difference is. [St. Thomas](#) (I, Q. xxvii), following [St. Augustine](#) (Do Trin., XV, xxvii), finds the explanation and, as it were, the epitome, of the doctrine in principle that, in [God](#), the Son proceeds through the Intellect and the Holy Ghost through the Will. The Son is, in the language of Scripture, the *image* of the [Invisible God](#), His Word, His uncreated *wisdom*. [God](#) contemplates Himself and knows Himself from all eternity, and, knowing Himself, He forms within Himself a substantial idea of Himself, and this substantial thought is His Word. Now every act of knowledge is accomplished by the production in the intellect of a representation of the object known; from this head, then the process offers a certain analogy with generation, which is the production by a living being of a being partaking of the same nature; and the analogy is only so much the more striking when there is question of this act of Divine knowledge, the eternal term of which is a substantial being, consubstantial within the knowing subject. As to the Holy Ghost, according to the common doctrine of theologians, He proceeds through the will. The Holy Spirit, as His name indicates, is Holy in virtue of His origin, His *spiration*; He comes therefore from a holy principle; now holiness resides in the will, as wisdom is in the intellect. That is also the reason why He is so often called *par excellence*, in the writings of the Fathers, *Love* and *Charity*. The Father and the Son love one another from all eternity, with a perfect ineffable love; the term of this infinite fruitful mutual love is Their Spirit Who is co-eternal and con-substantial with Them. Only, the Holy Ghost is not indebted to the manner of His Procession precisely for this perfect resemblance to His principle, in other words for His consubstantiality; for to will or love an object does not formally imply the production of its immanent image in the soul that loves, but rather a tendency, a movement of the will towards the thing loved, to be united to it and enjoy it. So, making every allowance for the feebleness of our intellects in knowing, and the unsuitability of our words for expressing the [mysteries](#) of the Divine life, if we can grasp how the word *generation*, freed from all the imperfections of the material order may be applied by analogy to the Procession of the Word, so we may see that the term can in no way befittingly applied to the Procession of the Holy Ghost.



# FILIOQUE

- Having treated of the part taken by the Son in the Procession of the Holy Ghost, we come next to consider the introduction of the expression [Filioque](#) into the Creed of Constantinople. The author of the addition is unknown, but the first trace of it is found in Spain. The [Filioque](#) was successively introduced into the Symbol of the Council of Toledo in 447, then, in pursuance of an order of another synod held in the same place (589), it was inserted in the [Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed](#). Admitted likewise into the [Symbol Quicumque](#), it began to appear in France in the eighth century. It was chanted in 767, in [Charlemagne's](#) chapel at Gentilly, where it was heard by ambassadors from Constantine Copronymus. The Greeks were astonished and protested, explanations were given by the Latins, and many discussions followed. The [Archbishop](#) of Aquileia, [Paulinus](#), defended the addition at the Council of Friuli, in 796. It was afterwards accepted by a council held at [Aachen](#), in 809. However, as it proved a stumbling-block to the Greeks [Pope Leo III](#) disapproved of it; and, though he entirely agreed with the [Franks](#) on the question of the doctrine, he advised them to omit the new word. He himself caused two large silver tablets, on which the creed with the disputed expression omitted was engraved to be erected in [St. Peter's](#). His advice was unheeded by the [Franks](#); and, as the conduct and schism of Photius seemed to justify the Westerns in paying no more regard to the feelings of the Greeks, the addition of the words was accepted by the [Roman Church](#) under [Benedict VIII](#) (cf. Funk, "Kirchengeschichte", Paderborn, 1902, p. 243).
- The Greeks have always blamed the Latins for making the addition. They considered that, quite apart from the question of doctrine involved by the expression, the insertion was made in violation of a decree of the [Council of Ephesus](#), forbidding anyone "to produce, write, or compose a confession of faith other than the one defined by the Fathers of Nicæa". Such a reason will not bear examination. Supposing the truth of the dogma (established above), it is inadmissible that the [Church](#) could or would have deprived herself of the right to mention it in the symbol. If the opinion be adhered to, and it has strong arguments to support it, which considers that the developments of the Creed in what concerns the Holy Ghost were approved by the [Council of Constantinople \(381\)](#), at once it might be laid down that the bishops at [Ephesus](#) (431) certainly did not think of condemning or blaming those of [Constantinople](#). But, from the fact that the disputed expression was authorized by the [Council of Chalcedon](#), in 451, we conclude that the prohibition of the [Council of Ephesus](#) was never understood, and ought not to be understood, in an absolute sense. It may be considered either as a doctrinal, or as a merely disciplinary pronouncement. In the first case it would exclude any addition or modification opposed to, or at variance with, the deposit of Revelation; and such seems to be its historic import, for it was proposed and accepted by the Fathers to oppose a formula tainted with Nestorianism. In the second case considered as a disciplinary measure, it can bind only those who are not the depositaries of the supreme power in the [Church](#). The latter, as it is their duty to teach the revealed truth and to preserve it from error, possess, by Divine authority, the power and right to draw up and propose to the faithful such confessions of faith as circumstances may demand. This right is as unconfined as it is inalienable.

# GIFTS OF THE HOLY GHOST

- This title and the theory connected with it, like the theory of the fruits of the Holy Ghost and that of the sins against the Holy Ghost, imply what theologians call [appropriation](#). By this term is meant attributing especially to one Divine Person perfections and exterior works which seem to us more clearly or more immediately to be connected with Him, when we consider His personal characteristics, but which in reality are common to the Three Persons. It is in this sense that we attribute to the Father the perfection of [omnipotence](#), with its most striking manifestations, e.g. the [Creation](#), because He is the principle of the two other Persons; to the Son we attribute wisdom and the works of wisdom, because He proceeds from the Father by the [Intellect](#); to the Holy Ghost we attribute the operations of grace and the sanctification of souls, and in particular spiritual *gifts* and *fruits*, because He proceeds from the Father and the Son as Their mutual love and is called in [Holy Writ](#) the goodness and the charity of [God](#).
- The gifts of the Holy Ghost are of two kinds: the first are specially intended for the sanctification of the person who receives them; the second, more properly called [charismata](#), are extraordinary favours granted for the help of another, favours, too, which do not sanctify by themselves, and may even be separated from [sanctifying grace](#). Those of the first class are accounted seven in number, as enumerated by [Isaias](#) (11:2-3), where the prophet sees and describes them in the [Messias](#). They are the gifts of wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety (godliness), and fear of the Lord.

- The gift of wisdom, by detaching us from the world, makes us relish and love only the things of heaven.
- The gift of understanding helps us to grasp the truths of religion as far as is necessary.
- The gift of counsel springs from supernatural prudence, and enables us to see and choose correctly what will help most to the glory of [God](#) and our own salvation.
- By the gift of fortitude we receive courage to overcome the obstacles and difficulties that arise in the practice of our religious duties.
- The gift of knowledge points out to us the path to follow and the dangers to avoid in order to reach heaven.
- The gift of piety, by inspiring us with a tender and filial confidence in [God](#), makes us joyfully embrace all that pertains to His service.
- Lastly, the gift of fear fills us with a sovereign respect for [God](#), and makes us dread, above all things, to offend Him.

- As to the inner nature of these gifts, theologians consider them to be supernatural and permanent qualities, which make us attentive to the voice of [God](#), which render us susceptible to the workings of [actual grace](#), which make us love the things of [God](#), and, consequently, render us more obedient and docile to the inspirations of the Holy Ghost.
- But how do they differ from the [virtues](#)? Some writers think they are not really distinct from them, that they are the virtues inasmuch as the latter are [free gifts of God](#), and that they are identified essentially with grace, charity, and the virtues. That opinion has the particular merit of avoiding a multiplication of the entities infused into the soul. Other writers look upon the gifts as perfections of a higher order than the virtues; the latter, they say, dispose us to follow the impulse and guidance of [reason](#); the former are functionally intended to render the will obedient and docile to the inspirations of the Holy Ghost. For the former opinion, see Bellevüe, "L'uvre du Saint-Esprit" (Paris, 1902), 99 sq.; and for the latter, see St. Thomas, I-II, Q. Ixviii, a. 1, and Froget, "De l'habitation du Saint-Esprit dans les âmes justes" (Paris, 1900), 378 sq.
- The gifts of the second class, or [charismata](#), are known to us partly from [St. Paul](#), and partly from the history of the primitive [Church](#), in the bosom of which [God](#) plentifully bestowed them. Of these "manifestations of the Spirit", "all these things [that] one and the same Spirit worketh, dividing to every one according as he will", the Apostle speaks to us, particularly in I Corinthians 12:6-11; I Corinthians 12:28-31; and Romans 12:6-8.

- In the first of these three passages we find nine [charismata](#) mentioned: the gift of speaking with wisdom, the gift of speaking with knowledge, faith, the grace of healing, the [gift of miracles](#), the [gift of prophecy](#), the [gift of discerning spirits](#), the [gift of tongues](#), the gift of interpreting speeches. To this list we must at least add, as being found in the other two passages indicated, the gift of government, the gift of helps, and perhaps what [Paul](#) calls *distributio* and *misericordia*. However, [exegetes](#) are not all agreed as to the number of the [charismata](#), or the nature of each one of them; long ago, [St. Chrysostom](#) and [St. Augustine](#) had pointed out the obscurity of the question. Adhering to the most probable views on the subject, we may at once classify the [charismata](#) and explain the meaning of most of them as follows. They form four natural groups:
  - Two [charismata](#) which regard the teaching of Divine things: *sermo sapientiæ*, *sermo scientiæ*, the former relating to the exposition of the [higher mysteries](#), the latter to the body of [Christian](#) truths.
  - Three [charismata](#) that lend support to this teaching: *fides*, *gratia sanitarum*, *operatio virtutum*. The faith here spoken of is faith in the sense used by Matthew 17:19: that which works wonders; so it is, as it were, a condition and a part of the two gifts mentioned with it.
  - Four [charismata](#) that served to edify, exhort, and encourage the faithful, and to confound the unbelievers: *prophetia*, *discretio spirituum*, *genera linguarum*, *interpretatio sermonum*. These four seem to fall logically into two groups; for [prophecy](#), which is essentially inspired pronouncement on different religious subjects, the declaration of the future being only of secondary import, finds its complement and, as it were, its check in the gift of discerning spirits; and what, as a rule, would be the use of [glossolalia](#) -- the gift of speaking with tongues -- if the gift of interpreting them were wanting?
  - Lastly there remain the [charismata](#) that seem to have as object the administration of temporal affairs, amid works of charity: *gubernationes*, *opitulationes*, *distributiones*. Judging by the context, these gifts, though conferred and useful for the direction and comfort of one's neighbour, were in no way necessarily found in all ecclesiastical superiors.

- The [charismata](#), being extraordinary favours and not requisite for the sanctification of the individual, were not bestowed indiscriminately on all [Christians](#). However, in the Apostolic Age, they were comparatively common, especially in the communities of [Jerusalem](#), [Rome](#), and [Corinth](#). The reason of this is apparent: in the infant [Churches](#) the [charismata](#) were extremely useful, and even morally necessary, to strengthen the faith of believers, to confound the infidels, to make them reflect, and to counterbalance the false [miracles](#) with which they sometimes prevailed. [St. Paul](#) was careful (I Corinthians 12, 13, 14) to restrict authoritatively the use of these [charismata](#) within the ends for which they were bestowed, and thus insist upon their subordination to the power of the [hierarchy](#). Cf. Batiffol, "L'Eglise naissante et le catholicisme" (Paris, 1909), 36. (See [CHARISMATA](#).)

# FRUITS OF THE HOLY GHOST

- Some writers extend this term to all the supernatural virtues, or rather to the acts of all these virtues, inasmuch as they are the results of the [mysterious](#) workings of the Holy Ghost in our souls by means of His grace. But, with St. Thomas, I-II, Q. lxx, a. 2, the word is ordinarily restricted to mean only those supernatural works that are done joyfully and with peace of soul. This is the sense in which most authorities apply the term to the list mentioned by [St. Paul](#) (Galatians 5:22-23): "But the fruit of the Spirit is, charity, joy, peace, patience, benignity, goodness, longanimity, mildness, faith, modesty, continency, chastity." Moreover, there is no doubt that this list of twelve -- three of the twelve are omitted in several Greek and Latin manuscripts -- is not to be taken in a strictly limited sense, but, according to the rules of Scriptural language, as capable of being extended to include all acts of a similar character. That is why the [Angelic Doctor](#) says: "Every virtuous act which man performs with pleasure is a fruit." The fruits of the Holy Ghost are not [habits](#), permanent qualities, but [acts](#). They cannot, therefore, be confounded with the virtues and the gifts, from which they are distinguished as the effect is from its cause, or the stream from its source. The charity, patience, mildness, etc., of which the Apostle speaks in this passage, are not then the virtues themselves, but rather their acts or operations; for, however perfect the virtues may be, they cannot be considered as the ultimate effects of grace, being themselves intended, inasmuch as they are active principles, to produce something else, i.e. their acts. Further, in order that these acts may fully justify their metaphorical name of *fruits*, they must belong to that class which are performed with ease and pleasure; in other words, the difficulty involved in performing them must disappear in presence of the delight and satisfaction resulting from the good accomplished.



# SINS AGAINST THE HOLY GHOST

- The sin or blasphemy against the Holy Ghost is mentioned in Matthew 12:22-32; Mark 3:22-30; Luke 12:10 (cf. 11:14-23); and Christ everywhere declares that it shall not be pardoned. In what does it consist? If we examine all the passages alluded to, there can be little doubt as to the reply.
- Let us take, for instance, the account given by [St. Matthew](#) which is more complete than that of the other [Synoptics](#). There had been brought to Christ "one [possessed](#) with a [devil](#), blind and dumb: and he healed him, so that he spoke and saw". While the crowd is wondering, and asking: "Is not this the Son of David?", the [Pharisees](#), yielding to their wonted jealousy, and shutting their eyes to the light of evidence, say: "This man casteth not out [devils](#) but by Beelzebub the prince of the [devils](#)." [Jesus](#) then proves to them this absurdity, and, consequently, the malice of their explanation; He shows them that it is by "the Spirit of God" that He [casts out devils](#), and then He concludes: "therefore I say to you: Ever sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven men, but the blasphemy of the Spirit shall not be forgiven. And whosoever shall speak a word against the [Son of man](#), it shall be forgiven him: but he that shall speak against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, nor in the world to come."



- So, to sin against the Holy Ghost is to confound Him with the spirit of evil, it is to deny, from pure malice, the Divine character of works manifestly Divine. This is the sense in which [St. Mark](#) also defines the sin question; for, after reciting the words of the Master: "But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost shall never have forgiveness", he adds at once: "Because they said: He hath an unclean spirit." With this sin of pure downright malice, [Jesus](#) contrasts the sin "against the [Son of man](#)", that is the sin committed against Himself as man, the wrong done to His humanity in judging Him by His humble and lowly appearance. This fault, unlike the former, might be excused as the result of man's ignorance and misunderstanding.
- But the [Fathers of the Church](#), commenting on the Gospel texts we are treating of, did not confine themselves to the meaning given above. Whether it be that they wished to group together all objectively analogous cases, or whether they hesitated and wavered when confronted with this point of doctrine, which [St. Augustine](#) declares (Serm. ii de verbis Domini, c. v) one of the most difficult in [Scripture](#), they have proposed different interpretations or explanations.
- [St. Thomas](#), whom we may safely follow, gives a very good summary of opinions in II-II, Q. xiv. He says that blasphemy against the Holy Ghost was and may be explained in three ways.

- Sometimes, and in its most literal signification, it has been taken to mean the uttering of an insult against the Divine Spirit, applying the appellation either to the Holy Ghost or to all three Divine persons. This was the sin of the [Pharisees](#), who spoke at first against "[the Son of Man](#)", criticizing the works and human ways of [Jesus](#), accusing Him of loving good cheer and wine, of associating with the [publicans](#), and who, later on, with undoubted bad faith, traduced His Divine works, the [miracles](#) which He wrought by virtue of His own Divinity.
- On the other hand, [St. Augustine](#) frequently explains blasphemy against the Holy Ghost to be final impenitence, perseverance till death in mortal sin. This impenitence is against the Holy Ghost, in the sense that it frustrates and is absolutely opposed to the remission of sins, and this remission is [appropriated](#) to the Holy Ghost, the mutual love of the Father and the Son. In this view, [Jesus](#), in Matthew 12 and Mark 3 did not really accuse the [Pharisees](#) of blaspheming the Holy Ghost, He only warned them against the danger they were in of doing so.
- Finally, several [Fathers](#), and after them, many [scholastic theologians](#), apply the expression to all sins directly opposed to that quality which is, by [appropriation](#), the characteristic quality of the Third Divine Person. Charity and goodness are especially attributed to the Holy Ghost, as power is to the Father and wisdom to the Son. Just, then, as they termed sins against the Father those that resulted from frailty, and sins against the Son those that sprang from ignorance, so the sins against the Holy Ghost are those that are committed from downright malice, either by despising or rejecting the inspirations and impulses which, having been stirred in man's soul by the Holy Ghost, would turn him away or deliver him from evil.

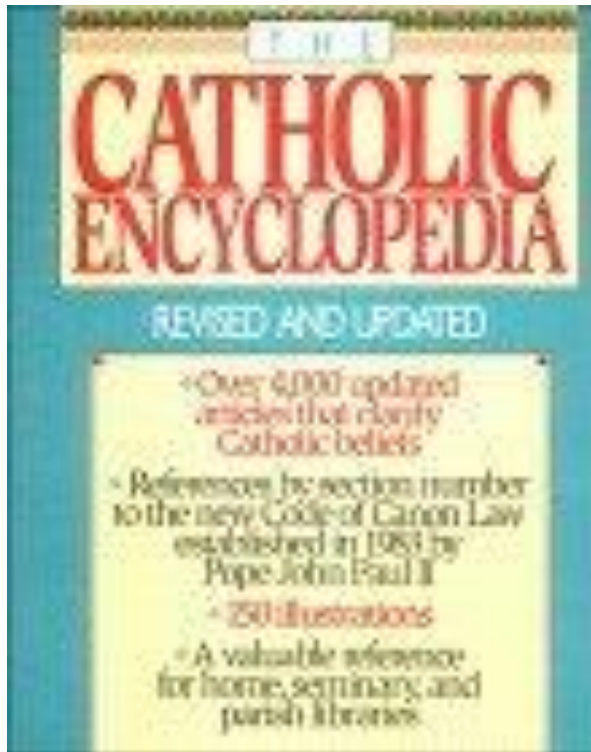
- It is easy to see how this wide explanation suits all the circumstances of the case where Christ addresses the words to the [Pharisees](#). These sins are commonly reckoned six: [despair](#), [presumption](#), impenitence or a fixed determination not to repent, obstinacy, resisting the known truth, and envy of another's spiritual welfare.
- The sins against the Holy Ghost are said to be unpardonable, but the meaning of this assertion will vary very much according to which of the three explanations given above is accepted. As to final impenitence it is absolute; and this is easily understood, for even [God](#) cannot pardon where there is no repentance, and the moment of death is the fatal instant after which no mortal sin is remitted. It was because [St. Augustine](#) considered [Christ's](#) words to imply absolute unpardonableness that he held the sin against the Holy Ghost to be solely final impenitence. In the other two explanations, according to [St. Thomas](#), the sin against the Holy Ghost is remissable -- not absolutely and always, but inasmuch as (considered in itself) it has not the claims and extenuating circumstance, inclining towards a pardon, that might be alleged in the case of sins of weakness and ignorance. He who, from pure and deliberate malice, refuses to recognize the manifest work of [God](#), or rejects the necessary means of salvation, acts exactly like a sick man who not only refuses all medicine and all food, but who does all in his power to increase his illness, and whose malady becomes incurable, due to his own action. It is true, that in either case, [God](#) could, by a [miracle](#), overcome the evil; He could, by His [omnipotent](#) intervention, either nullify the natural causes of bodily death, or radically change the will of the stubborn sinner; but such intervention is not in accordance with His ordinary providence; and if he allows the secondary causes to act, if He offers the free human will of ordinary but sufficient grace, who shall seek cause of complaint? In a word, the irremissableness of the sins against the Holy Ghost is exclusively on the part of the sinner, on account of the sinner's act.

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