

# MYSTERY OF THE BLESSED TRINITY.

## CATHOLIC ANECDOTES

### CHAPTER III.

## FIRST ARTICLE OF THE CREED.

*I Believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of Heaven and Earth.*

## IV. - MYSTERY OF THE BLESSED TRINITY.

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### 62. *Baptism of Our Lord.* -

The mystery of the Most Holy Trinity was manifested in a very special manner at the Baptism of Our Lord, for we there find distinctively the three divine persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, as you are doubtless aware, my dear children! Jesus Christ, having reached the age of thirty years, prepared to preach the Gospel to men. But He would first receive Baptism, not to efface original sin, since He could not be sullied by it, but to give water the virtue of effacing it in those who should afterwards receive that so precious Sacrament. He, therefore, quitted Nazareth, in Galilee, and went to find St. John the Baptist, who was preaching on the banks of the Jordan in order to be baptized by him. After having, through humility, made some objections, St. John did as He desired. Our Lord then went down bare

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foot into the river, which was not deep, and His holy precursor poured water on His head. At the moment when Jesus came forth from the water, engaged in prayer, the heavens opened, and the Holy Ghost appeared in the form of a snow-white dove, resting on His head. At the same moment a voice was heard, as if from Heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." You can easily distinguish here, my young friends, the three persons of the Blessed Trinity: the Father, who speaks; the Son made man, who is baptized; and the Holy Ghost who rests upon Him.

- *St. Matthew*, III.; *St. Mark*, I.; *St. Luke*, III.

### 63. *Origin of the Gloria Patri.* -

The mystery of the Most Holy Trinity, my dear children, has always been honoured in a very particular manner in the Church. All the Sundays of the year are, in some measure, consecrated to the Blessed Trinity; but, in order to honour it still more specially, the Church adopted the custom of reciting very frequently in the liturgy, the *Gloria Patri*. The learned Cardinal Bona thinks that the first part of that prayer, which is called the *little Doxology*, was composed by the Apostles themselves. It is composed of the following words, which you all know by heart: "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost." The same learned

authority informs us that it was the Council of Narbonne, in 589, that first ordained the singing of it at the end of each psalm. The Arians and some other heretics having changed some words,

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in the *Gloria Patri*, to justify their errors, the General Council of Nice (Nicea), held in 325, added to it the words which form the second part, namely: "As it was in beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen." As often as this beautiful prayer repeated, it is a pretty general custom to bow the head, as if to honour and salute more particularly the three Divine Persons. But it is not the case, as stated by the learned Ferraris, that Pope John XXII. granted an indulgence of thirty days as often as the head was bowed in this way.

- PASCAL, *Origine et Raison de la Liturgie Catholique*, 507.

64. *St. Barbara's Three Windows.* -

I have read in the Lives of the Saints a story that edified me much, and which relates precisely to the Blessed Trinity. It is recorded in the life of St. Barbara, Virgin and Martyr, whom the artillerymen, I know not why, have chosen for their patroness. That Saint had always had a great devotion for the three persons of the adorable Trinity. Her father was a pagan, and as she would never abjure the Christian religion to please him, he had her shut up in a high tower, as yet unfinished, then set out on a distant journey.

St. Barbara having remarked that there were only two windows in the apartment intended for her, prevailed on the workmen, after many entreaties, to put in a third, because it was her intention to consecrate them to the three divine persons. When her father returned, and saw that his plan had not been carried out, and, moreover, that Barbara was the cause of the

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alteration, he became furious. But his rage increased still more when he found that his daughter was as firm in her faith as before. Maddened by this conviction, he threw himself on the youthful virgin, who ceased not to invoke the Blessed Trinity, and ran her through with a sword he held in his hand. This was in 306. This holy martyr is honoured on the 4th of December.

- ST. JOHN DAMASCENE.

65. *The Sea in a Little Hole.* -

St. Augustine, one of the greatest doctors of the Church, was walking one day on the shore of the Mediterranean Sea. He was meditating on the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity, and sought to fathom it, in order that he might be able to explain it the better in a work he was about to compose, or in sermons he might have to preach. He was absorbed in this inquiry, when he saw a little boy carrying water continually from the sea, in a small shell, and throwing it into a hole which he had made in the sand. "What is that you are doing, my little boy?" said St. Augustine. "I am trying to put all the water of the sea in this little hole" "But, my dear child, that is impossible," resumed the holy bishop, laughing heartily at the child's artless simplicity; "do you not perceive that the hole is too small, and the sea too large?" "You think, then that I shall not succeed? Well! I can assure you it will be easier for me to put all the water of the sea into this little hole, than for you to comprehend or explain the doctrine of the Holy Trinity." No soon had the child spoken these words than he disappeared.

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It was an angel who had taken that form to give St. Augustine this important lesson. The learned doctor thanked God for such a favour, and gave himself no further trouble endeavouring to penetrate inscrutable mysteries but thanked God for such meagre insights as he had thus far gained.

- ST. AUGUSTINE, *Confessions*.

## V. - GOD THE FATHER ALMIGHTY, CREATOR.

### 66. *Did God Make the Flies?* -

One thing I wish you to remember, my young friends, and that is, that the heart is always spoiled and corrupted before the mind becomes sceptical and unbelieving. This is exemplified in all infidels. I might cite a thousand examples, but I prefer to give you one that you do not know, one that I read in an excellent book entitled "*The Practice of Christian Perfection*." St. Augustine relates that a certain man, a Catholic, being much annoyed by the flies which incessantly troubled him, was visited by a Manichean, to whom he told the inconvenience he experienced, and the irritation which he could not help feeling in consequence. The Manichean, thinking this an excellent opportunity to insinuate his heresy, which was, that there are two principles in all things: one invisible, which is God, and the other visible, which is the devil. "Now, who do you think," said he, "created those flies?" The Catholic, who found them so troublesome, dared not to say that it was God. "Well, if it be not God," resumed the Manichean, "who was it that made them?" "I believe it was the devil." "But," persisted

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the tempter, "if it was the devil that made the flies, who, then, made the bees, which are a little larger?" The Catholic, having just said that God did not make the flies, could not well say that He had made the bees; so it was that on account of the little difference he saw in the size of the insects, he answered that if God had not made the flies, it was plain He had not made the bees. The Manichean, seeing that, led him farther, little by little, passed from the bee to the grasshopper, which is a little bigger, from the grasshopper to the lizard, from the lizard to the sparrow, from the sparrow to the cat, from the cat to the sheep, and thence to the ox, the elephant, and finally to man, ending by persuading this impatient Christian that God did not create man. See into what an abyss he fell, because he could not bear patiently so trifling an annoyance as that of the flies!  
- RODRIGUEZ, *Christian Perfection*, III., 98.

### 67. *The Acorn and the Gourd*. -

When you come to read the *Fables of La Fontaine*, children, you will find one of them, in particular, very amusing; it is called *The Acorn and the Gourd*. A country boor took it into his head to criticize everything, without knowing what he was saying. He wondered much, for instance, that the oak tree bears no other fruit than acorns no bigger than one's finger, whilst shrubs and even the frailest stems, bear fruit of enormous size, such as melons, gourds and pumpkins. "If I had the charge of all that," said he aloud, "I'd be sure, to hang the biggest fruit on the biggest tree; that

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stands to reason." Whilst his mind was running on these reflections he sat down under a spreading oak and it was not long till he fell asleep. He had slept for some time when an acorn, falling on his nose, woke him up with a start. He raised his hand to his face, and perceived that it was bleeding. "Mercy on me!" he cried, "a little bit of an acorn to make me bleed! Why, now, if it had been a gourd, I'd have had my head smashed, for certain! I see, after all, that what God does is well done."

- LA FONTAINE, *Fables*, Book VI., Fable 4.

68. *Vaucanson's Duck*. -

To create is to make something from nothing, and that can only be done by God alone. That reminds me of some fine lines, for which we are indebted to Father Lemoyne, a learned Jesuit of Chaumont, in the Department of Upper Marne (in France); he says, in his poem of *St. Louis*, (we give the literal, but not the versified translation)

"And those vast fields of azure and of light, -  
Drawn from the empty void, and without matter formed,  
Rounded without a compass, and without pivot hung, -  
Scarce cost one single word."

Physicians, mechanics, chemists, nay, even jugglers, make some surprising things, which suppose superior genius; but, once more I say, they do not make these things of nothing; they must have tools, instruments, substances, wherewith they may work. The most curious thing that was ever made was probably Vaucanson's duck. That famous mechanician

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amused himself with making a little wooden duck, in which he concealed a great number of very fine springs, most skilfully disposed. When he had finished, people came from all parts to admire his automaton. The duck was thrown into a piece of water, and every one could see it swim by itself, open its wings, shake them briskly, pick up grain with its bill, swallow, digest and pass it out just as a live duck would do. You may suppose, children, that the spectators were all amazed; they clapped their hands, and felicitated Vaucanson on his wonderful genius. And yet what is that to the works of God, who, at a word, created all this vast universe, and whose word keeps it perpetually in motion?

- *Magasin pittoresque*, Annee 1833, 160. G. S. G.

69. *The Windows of a Lonely Chapel*. -

I have told you, my young friends, when speaking of the Mystery of the Blessed Trinity, that *power* is attributed to the Father; hence we say of Him that He is the "Creator of heaven and earth." All that God has made is stamped with the character of infinite wisdom. I have somewhere read a story of a traveller who was not quite of that opinion, but really fancied that the world would have been better if things had been all arranged as he would have them. Passing one day through a wild forest, he perceived a little chapel which he was curious enough to enter. But instead of praying, he began to criticize all he saw, especially a little window, the glass which was very ancient and very gloomy in appearance.

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"What stupidity!" said our pilgrim, "how could any one put *that* in a chapel? Would it not be better to glaze that window with clear, white glass? It is just like the world, where all goes wrong and everything is done in direct opposition to common sense!" He was going on with his wise reflections, when the sun shone full through the window. Heavens! what a magnificent spectacle! That glass, but late so unsightly, presents a brilliant picture. In it is seen the bush, the name of **GOD** written in letters of fire, Moses prostrate on the earth, the flocks of Jethro grazing in the green meadows, etc., etc. At this sight the carping critic forgot all his ill humour; he could bite off his tongue for having spoken so rashly in his ignorance. He understood, then, that all that God does is well done; if it seems otherwise to us, it is because we see it the wrong way.

- CANON SCHMID, *The Flower-basket*.