

THE HOLY SPIRIT

CATHOLIC ANECDOTES

CHAPTER X

EIGHTH ARTICLE OF THE CREED.

I believe in the Holy Ghost.

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137. *Simon the Magician Flying in the Air.* -

The Holy Ghost, when He comes into a soul, pours forth His graces in a most miraculous manner; this was especially the case in the first ages of the Church. The Christians, when the Apostles imposed hands on them, immediately received that Divine Spirit, and thenceforth wrought miracles which astounded the multitude. Simon the Magician, witness of these wonders, would fain obtain from the Apostles the power of also giving the Holy Ghost to those on whom he should impose hands. For this purpose he offered them a large sum of money. "Wretch!" cried St. Peter, "your money perish with you, you that imagine the gifts of God can be bought! Go and do penance!" Ashamed of this scathing rebuke, Simon retires. What happened next is unclear but there is a very ancient tradition which tells a sorry tale.

It relates the following: Simon retires in a rage; but, instead of doing penance, he gives himself up more than ever to the abominations of magic and of impiety. After having corrupted all Samaria with his errors, he went to Rome with the intention of destroying the good

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which the Apostles had done there. One day he announced publicly that he would ascend into heaven in presence of all the people. You may well suppose that a great multitude assembled to witness such an extraordinary feat as that. And in fact, at the appointed moment, Simon the Magician was lifted up by the invisible power of the devil, and remained some time in the air. But his triumph was of short duration, for St. Peter, who had joined the crowd of spectators for the purpose of confounding the impostor, began to pray; the power of the devil ceased, and Simon fell so heavily to the ground that he broke all his bones, and died miserably a few days after. Terrible and just punishment of his blasphemous impiety!

- *Acts of the Apostles*, Chapter VIII., (see verses 4 to 25, especially verse 20)

- TILLEMONT, *Hist. Eccles.*, I., 185.

138. *Errors on the Holy Ghost.* -

In the Apostles' Creed, my young friends, there are but three or four words concerning the third person of the Blessed Trinity: *I believe in the Holy Ghost*. Several heretics availed themselves of this to advance frightful heresies with regard to that Divine Person. The most audacious of all was Macedonius, patriarch of Constantinople, whose sectaries were called Macedonians. He dared to maintain that the Holy Ghost is not God; that He is simply a spiritual creature, of the same nature as the angels, but of a much higher rank. Good Catholics were shocked at this impiety, and cried out with one voice against Macedonius. Nevertheless, that wretch, abusing the authority of his

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charge, violently persecuted the true faithful, and consigned a great number of them to death and tortures, to force them to say that the Holy Ghost is not God. Then Pope St. Damasus held at Constantinople, in the year 381, the second ecumenical council, which condemned that error and all others which might exist in relation to the Holy Ghost. In order to define forever the faith of the Church on that subject, he caused to be added to the Nicene Creed, which is sung in Latin every Sunday at Grand Mass, certain important words. (Footnote: this is the custom under the liturgy promulgated by Pope Saint Pius V. Now, with the liturgy of the great Pope Paul VI, we sing or say the same words, either in Latin or in our native tongue, at every single Sunday Eucharist.) The following are the words in question, which you know by heart (the word in brackets - Filioque - was added firstly by Pope Saint Leo in 447, and more solemnly at the reunion Council of Florence in 1438): *Et in Spiritum Sanctum Dominum et vivificantem, qui ex Patre (Filioque) procedit, qui cum Patre et Filio simul adoratur et conglorificatur, qui locutus est per prophetas.* Which means in English: "I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and life-giver, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father (and the Son); who, together with the Father and the Son, he is adored, worshipped, and glorified; who spoke by and through the Prophets." Macedonius was not living at the time when this council was held; but, as generally happens to those who give themselves up to the dominion of pride, he had constantly refused to submit to the Church, and retract his error. He ended his life miserably about the year 361.

- LASSAUSSE, *Explication du Cat. de l'Empire, (Explanation of the Catechism of the Empire)* 101.

139. *Is the Holy Ghost God?* -

The Holy Ghost is God, you know well, my dear children; He is the third person of the Blessed Trinity. I have read a story in this connection which is, I think, worthy of your attention. There lived in Spain, in the sixth

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century, a king of the Visigoths named Leovigild.

This prince, whilst believing in the divinity of the Father and the Son, doubted a little, and even more than a little, concerning that of the Holy Ghost. St. Gregory, Bishop of Tours, was informed of it by deputies whom Chilperic, king of France, had sent to that king, and who, on their return, paid a visit to the holy bishop. As he watched with much care over the maintenance of the true faith he must needs try and convince the king of Spain. Then he charged the deputies to tell him: "Prince, since you do not believe in the divinity of the Holy Ghost, will you explain to us why it was that St. Peter said to Ananias: 'How did Satan tempt you even to sin against the *Holy Ghost*? It is not to men you have lied, but to God himself'. (Acts 5:4)."

This text from so clear a passage of Scripture, quoted so seasonably, was a ray of light for the Visigoth king, and caused him to reflect seriously. He then saw plainly that the Holy Ghost is God, as well as the Father and the Son, and he frankly and fully adopted the doctrine of the Catholic Church, out of which there is no salvation.

- SCHMID et BELET, *Cat. Hist.*, I., 271.

140. *Speaking a Language Without Having Learned It.* -

Those amongst you who have read attentively the Epistle of the Mass of Pentecost, from the Acts of the Apostles Chapter 2, have seen that when the Holy Ghost had descended on the Apostles, they spoke in every tongue. Here is how it happened: They spoke only in Hebrew or in the Galilean dialect of Aramaic, which was their mother tongue, and strangers understood them so well

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that those who only understood Latin heard them speak Latin, others Greek, others Arabic, Persian, Mesopotamian, Asian, Egyptian, Libyan, Cretan, and so on. This gift of tongues has been renewed several times since then, on behalf of some great Saints. Thus, St. *Vincent Ferrier (or Ferrer)*, a great missionary of the fourteenth century, preached always in Spanish or in Latin, which did not prevent his being understood by French Bretons, Greeks, Germans, English, Hungarians, and other strangers who flocked to his sermons. The same thing is told of St. *Anthony of Padua*, and especially of St. *Francis Xavier*, Apostle of the Indies and Japan. But here is a fact no less interesting than any of the others. One day St. *Dominic*, being on his way to Paris, met some Germans who rendered him many kind offices. He wished much to requite them by some saving words, but knew not their tongue. One evening, however, he said to his companion: "If it please you, brother, we will pray to God to permit us to speak German, so that we may announce Jesus Christ to these worthy people." Immediately, they knelt down, prayed with fervour, and arose full of the gift they had asked. They spoke German for four days with those kindly strangers, and left them only when they arrived at Orleans.

- *Vie des Saints, (Lives of the Saints)* mentioned above in the article.