



Credo in unum Deo

## Some Thoughts on the Credo

To believe is to "accept the word or the realities of evidence." From the first moment we emerge from the womb, we know things. We know how to eat, we know when we feel discomfort and when we're satisfied with being comfortable. We immediately become aware of the nearness of love and the disorientation of rejection. If we're healthy, our breathing and sensing are on automatic. We are accepting, though not totally understanding the prevalence of what is evident; the conspicuousness of (being).

When we grow older we become committed to beliefs and disbeliefs; in is not out; up is not down; back is not forth; here is not there; etc. In practical ways continually become aware of the obvious; the positives and negatives of life and language. Some suffer hunger and deprivation while others, an abundance or overabundance of the necessities, depending on circumstances.

We become adults convinced of many things while many other things remain inconclusive. When things are believed or thought to be (decisively true), they are normally written down for the group or the population as a proclamation-or consensus. Certain (beliefs), by experience, are held to be applicable to all the people within the body. This is usually the way systems of laws become established and codified; "constitutional" guarantees for the good of all.

Generally, "creeds" are authenticated in the same way; a consensus of beliefs decisively established from (revealed) truths. "Revelation," meaning: evidenced by prophets and philosophers or from the personal observations and experiences of trusted individuals. The Apostles' Creed is one such "compendium of doctrine" said to have been established by the seventy-two chosen followers of Jesus, "whom he sent to preach and perform good works." The Apostles were frequently called "the

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disciples," (acceptors of a discipline). They left us the "Credo," so that "all who wished to become Christians would have a standard of truths that must be known and believed before receiving Baptism.

During Jesus' life on earth his deeds and teachings, which were prophesied in the "Old Testament" and substantiated with the "New," and were witnessed by both his followers and detractors. There are twelve articles or parts to the Creed. "They refer to God the Father in the works of creation; God the Son in the works of redemption; and God the Holy Spirit in the works of sanctification." "Each article contradicts one or more (false) doctrines on these subjects" prevalent in the earliest days of Christianity, so that truths held in common were not adulterated. These (beliefs) or understandings have not changed since the time of the Apostles.

With your forbearance I will share a few personal reflections on each of the twelve articles.

### **The Apostles' Creed as it is used today:**

1. I believe in God the Father, Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth;
  2. And in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord;
  3. Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary;
  4. Suffered under Pontius Pilate; was crucified, died and was buried;
- He descended into hell;
5. The third day he rose again from the dead;

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6. He ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of the Father Almighty;
7. From thence he shall come to judge the living and the dead.
8. I believe in the Holy Spirit;
9. The holy catholic church; the communion of saints;
10. The forgiveness of sins;
11. The resurrection of the body;
12. And life everlasting.

### **I believe in God the Father, Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth;**

I In science, from the materiality of what is, you can usually tell what was. We have gotten to the point in micro-studies that what used to be impossible to detect, can now be clearly seen and its activity observed. We have Particle Physics, which essentially proves what the ancient Greeks surmised about "atomic" structure, leaving us with the utterly simple statement that "matter is condensed energy." That includes: the paper I'm writing on; the pencil I'm writing with; my body, sitting in a chair, in a room in a house in West Palm Beach, Florida. I must add: the one thing that escapes this energy omnipresence is the range of a mind with, hopefully, enough imagination to traverse and penetrate most concepts; at least up to a point just before absolute origin. Every individual, if he or she is "honest" must admit that there (is) a limit beyond which the human mind cannot penetrate.

The miraculous phenomenon is, that the mind is a center unto itself - as is its Creator, but the human being cannot

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entirely fathom knowing its Originator because of the way it has been formed. The uncreated force, all powerful, all knowing, and all loving, is known to many of us as God. Proof of God should be plainly revealed by what has been created. In other words, God (is) revealed in what He has done and does. With individual ingenuity, we too are capable of creativity but within the limits and dependencies of the original creation.

When we have come to rest on the belief in God, we actually can claim a direct connection to the very first human beings, as the phrase: "family of man" more than implies. No one has ever given us any proof to the contrary, except to say "take our word for it." Even though, of late, certain groups are desperately trying to promote aversions, they have been preempted by John's gospel which says:

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

Many are graced to see holiness in all things when realizing that the existence of holiness is due to an Originator who is, of necessity, the primary cause of all that is. All those bosons, photons, muons, quarks, gluons, neutrinos, taus, etc., became what we now know as the universe, including us! I believe we do sense it being revealed because of our creativity.

### **And in Jesus Christ his only son our Lord.**

2 I suppose there are many who have not heard of Jesus Christ. In this shrinking world there would have to be far fewer in this century than in the last. Of those who know of Jesus, a finite number know him as (God's Son), once they grasp the meaning of the title "Son of God." If God "the Father" is the Almighty Creator of all that (is), it must be true that we are all sons and daughters of God in effect; but being human we are only capable of human-

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natural acts. Our earthly lifespan is limited. Even though science has been able to expand it slightly, death is assured sooner or later. The uniqueness about Jesus' revelations regarding his Father are very clear, and were written down by those who knew him. It was he who said that there was a way and a truth about life that would save us from death by conquering the world (nature); and that he was that way. He demonstrated it quite a few times during his life on earth, and finally emphasized the truth of his claim by his own death and resurrection again recorded by those who witnessed the events. Now, this being true, one is given to think it had to have been the most important event of all time.

The witnesses who saw and touched Jesus after the event persisted, and with the help of the Spirit, the truth of Jesus' resurrection spread to all parts of the world and wound up as the "Christian Confession," supported by the Apostles' Creed.

The story of the Christ, the Son of God, entering the "human-family" as Jesus, the Son of Mary, had been predicted for centuries before his birth. Some hold the opinion that the big bang's real purpose, was the Incarnation of God in Jesus Christ. In other words, the whole idea of Creation was to make man in the "image of God," then to accept God in the image of man; linking infinity with space-time. Son of God then works two ways, we are sons and daughters of God in effect, and Jesus is Son of God as God himself-in Christ. Simply put, God made the world to bring God to man-then to bring man to God; all for the sake of Love who is God. If time doesn't run out, science will eventually find that to be their answer, too!

**Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary;**

3 Life on earth is a continuation of prior life. Life begets new life. The biological function in nature is primarily a chain of events. The uncreated force that put it all in motion believers say is God, and it is God who keeps all things in motion, by his will.

The infinite attributed to God, subsumes time. Time is truly at God's discretion. Evil, as we know it, is a mental concept; but everything generated in a physical way is part of the chain of events from the origin forward. The great "inflation" of the universe; the cooling down of the fire-ball; star-formation, etc., are all the result of God's initial creation. One has to concede, judging from the result, that it is good. Since most of mankind thinks of God as all good, it is well understood that (no) evil can come from him. That Spirit of Love, as God, is holy, hence the Holy Spirit is God as love.

Christians believe it was by the power of the Spirit of Love that Jesus was conceived in the womb of the Virgin Mary, and thus "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. God became man when Christ was born of Mary, whose soul "magnified the Lord," and whose spirit rejoiced in God our Savior.

**Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried; He descended into Hell;**

4 The passion of Jesus Christ is, likely, the most well-known torture and murder story in history. "The bloody sacrifice of Calvary" is known by more and more people every year due to mass communications. What people (think) about the Crucifixion of Christ runs the gamut from sadness and tender adoration, to the question of why it has not, nor will not, be forgotten. The scriptural

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quote of Jesus: "When I am raised up, I will draw all people to myself," offers a two-fold explanation. First, the raising of the cross on Golgotha and his death; and second, his ascension to heaven forty days after his resurrection. The obvious fact is clear; hundreds of billions have been drawn to him for over twenty centuries.

The final question arising from this fourth phrase of the Creed is: Why is it said that "he descended into Hell." Can that be scripturally authenticated and reasonably answered? It can, both theologically and reasonably. Throughout history it has been ascertained that man understood death to be the separation of soul and body/mind. For whatever reason death occurs, the spirit life traverses space-time and becomes something other than what it had been in the living being. Traditionally, . it is said to wind up in "nether-land," the "underworld," the "Land of the dead," Sheol, Hades, Hell, etc. This is the metaphysical answer to the age-old question of the goal of the soul. Since Jesus is believed to have died for all, and would judge the living and the dead, it is theologically reasonable to concur that he would repair to the "underworld" for the purposes releasing those whose earthly lives deserved redemption. Many modern thinkers cannot accept such a condition, since the Enlightenment, and reject it out of hand. Still, the study of Phenomenology suggests that the question remains an open one. Shakespeare said it clearly in the soliloquy from Hamlet:

*"... that dread of something after death, the undiscovered country from whose bourn no traveler returns, puzzles the will, and makes us rather bear those ills we have than fly to others that we know not of? Thus conscience makes cowards of us all."*

Jesus the only human who has returned in his glorious state; upon whom all power of heaven and earth ,had

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been given, being one with the father; the first born of the dead; so that he only would be preeminent.

For the religious-minded, conscience is a spark of the Deity the human being, and must be scrupulously followed, under all circumstances, I rather think it is conscience that can make us saints rather than cowards. Our train of thought, in terms of decision-making is always concerned with conscience regardless of the fact that many think it sociologically constructed. A mentally healthy man or woman knows when they are not in line with the Spirit who circumscribes their own spirit; that is if their conscience is well-formed To revert to a “nature” that rejects that Spirit, is the Original Sin, which is believed washed away by the promises made at Baptism. An ancient accommodation of the human need for water as life giving and purifying is a fact in most religions. We’ve come out of the waters, so to speak. It makes more scientific sense than “quantum fluctuations.”

Now, a reasonable explanation may be offered as to why Jesus -was said to have “descended into hell.” The writers of scripture must have been most conscious of what was being said about the crucifixion, the theft of the body, etc., so that when the words of the witnesses were being put together, it was most important that they have the “followers” understand, without a doubt, that Jesus had (indeed) died. That he had given up his spirit, and was neither in a swoon nor a coma. For two thousand years, contrary fallacies still have legs in modern academia, to the delight of anti-Christians everywhere. Without a qualified understanding in faith that the Savior died a real death, resurrection and redemption becomes meaningless.

It suffices to say that the appearances of the Lord (in another state) after his death on the cross, corroborates all the ancient understandings of the transition of the spirit to a netherworld (another place), a keystone of

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Jewish belief, but, from which Jesus, and only Jesus, returned. This gave critical corroboration to his promises of eternal-life. For every individual who wishes for an historic, objective explanation of the Resurrection, it must be said, there is none! To all of the psychological scenarios recently added to biblical studies, few scholars give them credence.

There is little doubt that Jesus truly died on the cross. After Jesus "gave up his spirit," a Jewish leader, Joseph of Arimathaea, and perhaps another, Nicodemus, with their men, took Jesus' body down from the cross and placed it in an empty tomb. The women, who were also followers, watched from a distance. On the Sabbath, it is reasonable to assume that curiosity-seekers visited the area and saw the tomb sealed with the "rolling-stone."

### **The third day he rose again from the dead;**

5 On the first day of the week, the women returned to the tomb, early in the morning. The stone had been "rolled back" and the tomb was empty as described. Since Jesus had often predicted his defeat of death by rising three days after its occurrence, one can only imagine the bewilderment and excitement in announcing the vacant tomb to the others. The important fact is, he had died, and then appeared to the disciples afterward. This is the fact the Creed enshrines based entirely on witnesses from scriptural notations.

As would be expected, there appears to be minor differences between earlier versions of the Creed and later versions. For instance, the word "again" does not occur in "Tertullian's Creed" but does appear in the Old Roman Creed-thought to be used as an integral part of the rite of baptism. The candidate made his or her profession of faith, before being immersed in "cleansing" water, using the method of John the Baptist, and later the disciples. It was obviously a free

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commitment to what they had been taught as converts to Jesus Christ. "According to ancient tradition, the Creed was to be learned by heart and never be consigned to writing." This "provides a plausible explanation why no primitive text of the creed is preserved." "The earliest form is derived from what is pieced together from more or less scattered quotations."

The addition of the word "again" in line five, suggests one of two things. First, that Jesus had risen from the (dead) once before, or second, that he had been baptized (which we know). In the latter, "the dead" is a euphemism for a spiritual-sheol. As true man Jesus did not exempt himself from the rite by John, since he is God's proxy and man's proxy; the link of God to humanity. The God man was and is the living instrument of salvation and redemption. Man, in a generic sense, rises from a spiritual netherworld in baptism, to spiritual life, having pledged, in the Creed, allegiance to Almighty God the Father, through the Son in the Holy Spirit. The scriptural reference to this is clear in John 3:5: "In all truth I tell you, no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born through water and the Spirit;" etc.

Curiously enough, it has always been a pet theory of modern biochemistry that the building blocks of life emerged from the waters. This was offered by Dr. A.I. Oparin in 1938, followed by Stanley Lloyd Miller's experiments with "primordial soup" in 1952. He produced two simple amino acids and one or two more complicated ones. The kind of organic molecules formed in Miller's experiments were just those present in living tissue. Scientifically, the water of baptism and life may have (hypothetically) more significance than we are willing to give it. After all, we are made of the stars, chemically speaking, of course! Baptism may not only be a sign for the emergence of spiritual life, but also the emergence of organic life on the planet. It was Genesis

that used (clay) as the original material from which man was formed. I marvel at the way science and scripture frequently dovetail.

### **He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of the Father**

With matter as condensed energy and a vivid imagination, the human mind can and does contrive some absolutely fascinating symbolism. In the days when paradise or heaven was thought of as up, one would need to ascend in a helium balloon to get there.” We are able to imagine Jesus arriving in heaven, finding the Father sitting on a gem-encrusted throne, with a second similar throne directly to his right-hand. The word picture ancient minds painted, assured everyone of the (equality) of Jesus with the Father. Unless you modify the Father by making him an awesome king, it would be impossible to say that God has either a right or left hand side. We have known him from the New Testament only as a "voice" from heaven sounding like thunder; another marvelous metaphor. With Jesus saying: “no one has seen the Father except the Son,” one is prone to think of God in subjective terms. To add to this, Jesus used the familiar "abba" when addressing his Father-God, like speaking to a "person." What is a poor writer to do! First, he needed to describe what eyewitnesses claimed they saw, and then recount what Jesus had said about “going to his Father and our Father” (who art in heaven), where those of us who keep the commandment of love, will also go as he promised.

The question arises, does all this seem preposterous? Well, if we're thinking in earthly terms, it is necessary to provide a metaphor to establish a concrete, inexpressible idea (an analogy). Without analogous concepts there is no poetry or no asceticism. With analogous concepts we can vaguely “see” ultimate reality, but (through a glass darkly) as St. Paul put it. (Another analogy.)

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Let me use the example my electronic dictionary gave me when I looked up the word "metaphor": ("The evening of life. ") Now, we all know life has no evening. It may have an average "span" which actuaries use to figure out insurance premiums; but no evening! Think of the beauty of the metaphor; how the closing years of one's life-span may be (pictured) as the rich blue light of the closing of a day. I can't help thinking what Maxfield Parrish did with that cobalt-blue light in many of his paintings.

Scripture tells us of the ascension of Jesus in Mark 16: 19, in Luke 24:50, and Acts 1:9. It has us understand that Jesus was lifted "up" and disappeared from sight. Not totally impossible for a man who could raise the dead, and himself be raised from the dead to eat fish, speak and move about. In this age where all time and space is relative, there is no (up); but don't tell that to an American Airlines pilot who takes a jet "up" every day. We're using language to express an idea. We're breaking the bonds of gravity with the 757, and with Jesus, we're breaking the bonds of earthly reality to a new-reality (hyper-reality), otherwise known as "the other side" or heaven. Constrained by empirical proof, we would never be able to probe a courageous "what if," or never experience the grace of wonder and contemplate the reality beyond the mere physical, where (true) freedom is found. Let us hope we do not all become "block-heads"!

**From thence he shall come to judge the living and the dead.**

7 At the very end of Matthew's gospel Jesus is witnessed to have said:

"All authority in heaven and. on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore and. make disciples of all nations;

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baptizing them in the name of the Father and. of the Son and. of the Holy Spirit, and. teach them all the commands I gave you. And. look, I am with you always; yes, to the end of time."

Jesus has us understand, with these comforting words, that he will (stay) with us until earth-time ceases. If he is with us "always," then, from (whence) shall he come to judge both the living and the dead?

When Christ spoke these words in Matthew 28, it was after his resurrection and before his ascension. He was in what has been called his "glorified state." He was now the "risen Christ." When he appeared to the disciples and confronted Thomas, he had Thomas touch his wounds; doing that, Thomas exclaimed:

"My Lord (and) my God!" The word "lord" as it applies to human beings represents a master, a person having dominion over others, a ruler; it is a title of nobility, the Messiah. The word (God) has no such explanation. God is "the Father Almighty." God is (also) the Son in the mystery of the Holy Trinity. The expected (Messiah) is Lord; as true-man, Jesus demonstrated that he is the servant of all mankind by his death on the cross. He is the ultimate sin-offering, the Lamb of God, absolutely in keeping with the temple's sacrificial practice only on a universal scale. He becomes the means that takes away the sin of the world. There are no words at the "elevation" of the mass. Jesus' real presence is offered to the Father as the "un-bloody" sacrifice of Calvary. No one can adore a piece of bread and a cup of wine. It is the body of Christ that is adored at every legitimate mass, in every corner of the world.

Since Jesus tells us that all authority from the Father has been given to him, the way he chose to stay with us to the end of time is as the glorified Christ, in the Spirit and under the appearances of bread and wine. At the second

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coming, he will again be seen as the Son of Mary ... “and the powers of heaven will be shaken and then they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds with great power and glory.”

To think that the substance, or accidents, of bread and wine change into the substance of the body and blood of Christ is misconstruing the real-presence with regard to a twelfth century understanding of the word “substance,” and the current understanding of the word. Substances can not make a changeover from one category to another as understood by today's physics.

In the 2005 Winter issue of *Communio*, Denis Farkasfalvy, O Cist. wrote:

“The main misunderstanding of the term ‘transubstantiation’ consists in thinking that, in transubstantiation, God would separate, as if through some metaphysical surgery, ‘the accidents from their ‘substance’ and would then switch the substance of one being to replace the substance of another being. Such a notion of the miracle of the Eucharist would imply that what is metaphysically impossible happens by divine intervention. For it is impossible, even for someone empowered by a divine command, to say above a piece of bread or a cup of wine ‘this is Toto and, lo and behold, the food and wine become a dog, because they (their substance) had been changed into the ‘substance’ of my dog without this change affecting the accidents of the bread and wine. Not only is this a senseless and repulsive caricature of transubstantiation, but it implies an impossible change in the ‘elements,’ since accidents are not beings in se and thus the physical properties of bread and wine do not have the possibility or potential to be the ‘mode of existence’ for the ‘substance’ of a dog. My dog is not a reality that can be signified by accidents that are not its own: it needs the accidents (i.e., the physical/biological properties of a dog in order to exist

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in this world as a dog, and therefore it is not capable of existing in another way (without its accidents but appropriating another being's accidents) or 'elsewhere' in another order of existence."

"Now, the picture changes significantly with the Eucharist, in which we are no longer dealing with two worldly substances, because the risen Christ is not part of the changing and decaying physical world: 'Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him (Rom 6:9). At his resurrection Christ did not 'return' into our perishable life, but became the 'firstborn of the dead,' (Col 1: 18, Rv 1 :5), the foundation stone of the world to come, which the Book of Revelation calls the 'New Heaven and New Earth' (21: 1). Yet he can use physical parts of this world as signs to mediate his presence so that, while pertaining to the 'world to come,' his presence could become inserted through sacramental signs into the space-time continuum of the passing world in which we live and from which we make our 'Passover' into the mode of existence which Christ initiated."

"In virtue of the Lord's command, then, in the Eucharist perishable food and drink become what they signify, namely the risen Lord as true spiritual food and drink. This can happen only because the hypostatic union, achieved in the Incarnation, comes to full realization in the resurrection."

"Transubstantiation is possible for the Eucharist only because in his glorified humanity Jesus began existing 'in the glory of the Father' and, although a creature, this glorified humanity is no more part of the space-time continuum of the world or of history but is fully participating in the absolute divine act and has, therefore, all created beings within its reach as God does. Upon divine command the risen Christ can support as the ground of existence the physical properties of bread

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and wine, because he who said 'I am the living bread' and other such statements may use, in his risen state and already obtained union with the divine mode of existence, these physical signs as a window of entry into our physical world."

"A 'high' Eucharistic theology demands a 'high Christology.' The substantial change of the elements is conceivable only because the 'substance' to which bread and wine convert is hypostatically united to the divine nature in which Christ is 'consubstantial' with God .... This can be said from a different perspective but equivalently in the language of 'the sacramental sign.' In the act of consecration Christ is acting; he posits the bread and wine as signs of his glorified self in such a radical sense that the elements obtain full ontological transparency; their physical properties as bread and wine mean the Risen Christ as our spiritual food and drink so unambiguously that they also are just that: the risen Lord, soul and body, flesh and blood. Does this mean that at the Last Supper the Bread and Wine in Jesus' hands distribute his risen body? Exactly."

Although this theological explanation is a bit difficult to grasp with one reading, it is important to understand that the elements of bread and wine are (not) changed into the elements of flesh and blood regardless of the word "transubstantiation." Jesus taught it best when he said (the flesh has nothing to offer, it is the Spirit that is life). With this pure and simple explanation we indeed have the "real-presence." His "life" in the Eucharist!

Just before his passion and death Jesus informs us in Matthew 25:31: .

"When the Son of man comes in his glory, escorted by all the angels, then he will take his seat on his throne of glory, All nations will be assembled before him and he will separate people one from another as the shepherd

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separates sheep from goats. He will place the sheep on his right hand and the goats on his left. Then the King will say to those on his right hand, 'Come, you whom my Father has blessed, take as your heritage the kingdom prepared for you since the foundation of the world.'

Then he proceeded to tell us his (reason) for making the distinction; it boils down to love of God and love of neighbor; most particularly all those in need. Can we claim that his judgment is unjust? I think not, since the Lord had said many times, we will reap what we sow.

### **I believe in the Holy Spirit;**

8 The Spirit is the action of God, so he can be called "the giver of life." One cannot objectify the Spirit until and unless one recognizes his own spirit (the life of the body/mind), as circumscribed by the Holy Spirit. The only way of telling that God is doing the acting is by "seeing" that life, as it applies to each one of us, is (not) ultimately our own. Recognizing the total dependency on "the powers of heaven" is the Spirit "speaking" (in) our minds and "hearts." The voice of the Spirit is the voice of conscience coming from (eternity) - which (is) the life of God. There is very little one can add to what has been said about the Holy Spirit by Yves Conger in: "I Believe in the Holy Spirit." I am so humbled by his words that there is little else to say except to share them with you if you have not already read them for yourself. In his "Note on Experience" at the beginning of this exceptional work, he writes:

"By 'experience,' I mean our perception of the reality of God as he comes to us, is active in us and operates through us, drawing us to him in communion and friendship, as one being exists for the other. This experience falls short of vision and does not do away with the distance that we are aware of in our knowledge of God himself, but overcomes it at the level of a

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presence of God in us as the beloved end of our life, a presence that makes itself felt in signs and in the effects of peace, joy, certainty, consolation, enlightenment and all that goes with love. The experience that the great mystics have described is a special and indeed exceptional degree of this perception of a presence of God who is given to us so that we can 'enjoy' his presence as a living object of knowledge and love. On this side of what is exceptional, there is what is ordinary - our experience of God's presence and activity in the appeals and signs that occur in our prayer, our practice of the sacraments of faith, the life of the Church and the love of God and our neighbor."

"We can, of course, only become conscious of this experience and express it in terms or concepts that are our own. 'It is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God' (Rom 8:16). We find ourselves in finding God .... Although we have practical assurance, we can never say with total certainty-unless we have a private revelation-that we are in a 'state of grace.' Short of a direct vision of God that is without any created concept, there is no way of perceiving God and his activity that does not make use of our own mental resources and is not involved with those resources."

"The whole context of Christian life, our effective service of others in response to charity and to the appeals and demands that are contrary to our carnal selves are evidence that all this does not come from ourselves, but from God."

### **The holy catholic church; the communion of saints;**

9 If you believe in Jesus Christ, you will believe in his church, along with other living beings, and those who have died in the faith; the famous and the non-famous alike.

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Many only know the Church strictly as an institution; as an organized societal structure serving the needs of people in practical and sacerdotal ways; but it is vastly much more than that. It is Christ's means of serving humanity. As its head, Christ sent his Holy Spirit into its midst to sanctify and guide it. It carries on Christ's mission of redemption. Essentially, it is (Christ) acting on earth in Christians' all Christians not just its bishops and priests.

Anyone who struggles with right and wrong (and I believe that's all of us) understands the word "redemption" as a means offered to us to offset, or to compensate for our (creatureliness). If you read the newspapers or watch television you have seen what a combination of animal-nature and human-nature can do in terms of evil. Every creative means is used to wreck and destroy life rather than acknowledge and value it as a sacred gift of the Creator. It was Jesus himself as true man who brought the means of salvation to us. Simply put, salvation is deliverance from our own ignorance and retrogression. Christ did it by offering himself, as the supreme sacrifice for our reversions, in the name of the Father (as) the Son. Jesus established his "church," with Peter as its earthly leader within kingdom of God, he, Jesus, Christ the King is its only authority by command. He is the "gate of the sheepfold." Jesus' message could not be more clear, in John 10, he prays:

"I have come so that they may have life and have it to the full.

I am the good shepherd;

the good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep. "

"I am the good Shepherd; I know my own and my own know me,

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Just as the Father knows me and I know the Father."

The Church is the "body of Christ" all tied together in a unique unity of spirit with the Eucharist, Christ himself, Sacred Scripture, and its people both we the living, and those who have gone before us with the sign faith. The "founders," the Apostles, specified these beliefs in the Credo

The heart of the Church is Jesus in the Eucharist and the Spirit of Truth. We are thankful for his holy presence, attested to by the Communion of Saints,

### **The forgiveness of sins;**

No one can forgive (sin), other than God. Forgiveness is a necessary condition for keeping arrogance from getting out of hand on earth. In today's world, each of us establishes his or her own opinion of what is sinful and what is not. We tend to judge according to a subjective set of rules and standards, forgetting that we are often guilty of infractions against others' standards. Sins are "offenses against the laws of God." Crimes are offenses against the laws of the state. Most crimes are sins, though many sins are not crimes, according to the state. In so-called free democratic societies, the state is limited in its power to legislate against private morality and ethical behavior, because of certain enumerated, inalienable rights of its citizens. We have all seen how the rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness can become (relative) in the judgment of many, i.e., the child in the womb is not a person; free speech can be deleterious if not downright poisonous; the ingestion of mind-altering substances can be called "recreational" and lead to permanent damage or even death; we can help the elderly kill themselves, etc.

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Concern and charity for one's neighbor on a one-to-one basis, has been somewhat abrogated by huge government subsidies, in the interest of social "progress," which, to the contrary, removes incentive and turns alms into rights. Both Socialism and Capitalism are out of control in a world where there is an unequal distribution of resources to begin with. Cooperation and unity based on charity rather than ideology would leave no one starving to death, or forced to suffer the devastation of "uncontrollable" diseases.

Aggressiveness can be both good and bad. Being aggressive out of selfishness is offensive. Aggressiveness out of charity is sanctifying provided it supports the dignity and value of the individual as a child of God, and is gentle and kind in nature. Action in humility and love of neighbor is the key for rich and poor alike.

The bedrock of the law of God and of man is the Decalogue. A curious concept currently states: that the Ten Commandments have little or nothing to do with secular law, and are strictly religiously oriented. In protecting the "rights" of all, the majority winds up protecting the "rights" of the few who wish to alienate religion from society. In atheism, the "ethical self" is the only consecution. The separation of (a) church from (the) state is a correct reading of Article One of the American Constitution, but the separation of religious-principles from governing, is the first step to anarchy. There is no way to separate religion from the people.

A "providential" God is well known to be the initial power behind a "free" people, and a merciful God requires a merciful people. The old adage "to err is human, to forgive is divine" makes the connection from whence forgiveness originates. "Forgiveness" from our self-interest is tantamount to tyranny. The more conscious we become of our own faults the more

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forgiving we will be of others' faults; up to a point. There is also the indispensable matter of justice. An animal knows no sin or crime, but the human being, with an animal nature, must be held to the standards agreed upon by a society whose laws are for the most part based, again, on religious principles. Punishment for breaking that agreement is subject to secular justice. The breaking of God's laws (the Decalogue) is subject to God's justice. We can only consider ourselves justified" in the "eyes" of God by keeping the (laws) of God. When a lawyer tested Jesus, he asked: "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus asked him, "What is written in the law, what is your reading of it?" He replied, "You must love the Lord your God with your whole heart, your whole soul and your whole strength, and all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself" Jesus said to him, "You have answered right, do this and life is yours."

His saying: "Render to Caesar," etc., implies what an individual owes the state, not how we should treat one another. Many have used that saying to justify the separation clause of the U.S. Constitution in many ludicrous ways. We are to support the state for the protection it provides us; but more importantly, we owe the Creator our lives for having initially provided the elements of "light and life," and if you're Christian, the Redeemer to boot. The recognition of our dependence on God is the source of humility, which in turn is the source of forgiveness in humanity. The well-spring of all forgiveness is unquestionably the Divinity.

In the well known parable of the unforgiving debtor, the master handed him over to the torturers for not forgiving his fellow servant's debt. Jesus added: "And that is how my heavenly Father will deal with you unless you each forgive your brother from your heart," Humility and patience must be extended to all who do wrong, but in the final analysis, justice will prevail. In answering the disciples' questions regarding that justice, he said:

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“Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven; whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” Justice, then, is essentially God's justice entrusted to mortal man with regard to sin. In Luke 24:46, Jesus said to them: “So it is written that the Christ would suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that (in his name), repentance for the forgiveness of sins would be preached to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.” Finally, in John 20:21, Jesus appeared to the disciples in his glorified state and in no uncertain terms he said: “As the Father sent me, so I am sending you,” After saying this he breathed on them and said:

"Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven,

If you retain anyone's sins they are retained."

Again, the authority for the forgiveness of sins belongs to the Deity. Forgiveness, in the long run, can only be divine. Every honest religious practitioner knows that.

### **The resurrection of the body;**

The lyrical way Edward Fitzgerald couches his cynicism in the Rubaiyat of Omar Khavyam tests our fortitude. Two familiar quatrains jump out at us and try to stage an assault on our faith:

Why, all the Saints and Sages who discussed

Of the Two Worlds so wisely - they are thrust

Like foolish Prophets forth; their Words to Scorn Are  
scattered, and their Mouths are stopped with Dust.

Ah, make the most of what we yet may spend, Before  
we too into Dust descend;

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Dust into Dust, and under Dust, to lie,

Sans Wine, sans Song, sans Singer, and- sans End!

In this joyful mood, Fitzgerald revels in the futility of life itself by despairing of the (hope) of its being "everlasting;" he drowns the promises of Christ in the intoxicating wine of the moment. Let's look a bit deeper into the poet's premise and regenerate, or resurrect (if you will) the enthusiasm of belief.

When we were producing television and the show was over, the directors order to the technician was: "go to black!" Many people have the same feeling about the end of life-we just ... "go to black." It's a marvelous euphemism because it seems to express ultimate finality. It gives the impression that "judgment" is irrelevant. What remains of a life stays only in the memory centers of the living, and in time will fade away. It appears that everything we know about death is connected to what the living think about it. As Shakespeare said, it is the "undiscovered country from whose bourn (boundary, in an archaic sense), no traveler returns."

Can we say then that "black" is non-existence, even if its impossible to posit non-existence? Do we simply exit from life," and "go to black" or does "life" exit from us? Either way, we are dead! There is a corpse, life is gone! But where did it go?

Years ago someone determined that the value of the chemicals that made up the body were worth about 32 cents. Since times have changed, they're probably now worth about \$3.20. When everything is broken down to its original elements (Fitzgerald's dust) is that dust non-existent? Or is it the (dust) returned to the (dust) from whence it came? I think the latter. Let us go a little further. Whether we exit life or life exits us, is it

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“nothing?” Isn't it so that our life has become an integral part of other life?, of life itself, really. I think we can show that the life we have been given may not cease either. When exiting the body it surely cannot be "non-existent." Not only has it become part of the living but it returns to life itself, from whence it came.

Am I not sitting here with Fitzgerald's Saints and Sages, and experiencing their life becoming part of my life? Their “words to scorn” are certainly (not) entirely scattered. Right now we are discussing the “two worlds” they once wisely discussed, with them. Those glorified lives or spirits we are presently involved with, have certainly (not) gone to “black”!

Can the power that dispersed light and life to begin with, reconstitute the elements that make up persons (Fitzgerald's dust), and join them together with their (spirits) as souls again in a Resurrection of the Body at the end of time? I believe it can. If a spirit has had its “particular judgment” and it is negative according to its living deeds, its final verdict will be the same-executed by the Son in the name of the Father. If a spirit's deeds conformed to the commandments of love, its final state will be with the Deity forever, joined in holiness, enfolded in the Father, through the Son in the Holy Spirit. It was no fluke that two others were crucified with Jesus. While the one was resentful, the other was compassionate. To the compassionate and repentant one, Jesus is believed to have said:

“This day, you will be with me in Paradise.”

### **And life everlasting;**

Life goes on. It is, as the creed says, it's everlasting. Every life is circumscribed by the life of God, and the living God is eternal. Have we become so selfish to think that if we “go to black,” everything else goes to

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black? The whole “network” goes down? Or do we concur with what the panentheists say: We are all in God, as God is in us.

We each must ask ourselves, have we become sufficiently insolent to bet against Jesus and eternity? Or do we have enough of a healthy fear of God in us to say: “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us?” It is ardently to be hoped, we do!

“ ... more blessed still are those who hear the word of God and keep it.”

**Amen.**