

St. Thomas Aquinas

The Summa Theologica

(Benziger Bros. edition, 1947)

Translated by

Fathers of the English Dominican Province

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SECOND PART OF THE SECOND PART (SS) (Questions [1]-189)

TREATISE ON THE THEOLOGICAL VIRTUES (Questions [1]-46)

ON FAITH (Questions [1]-16)

OF FAITH (TEN ARTICLES)

Having to treat now of the theological virtues, we shall begin with Faith, secondly we shall speak of Hope, and thirdly, of Charity.

The treatise on Faith will be fourfold: (1) Of faith itself; (2) Of the corresponding gifts, knowledge and understanding; (3) Of the opposite vices; (4) Of the precepts pertaining to this virtue.

About faith itself we shall consider: (1) its object; (2) its act; (3) the habit of faith.

Under the first head there are ten points of inquiry:

- [\(1\)](#) Whether the object of faith is the First Truth?
 - [\(2\)](#) Whether the object of faith is something complex or incomplex, i.e. whether it is a thing or a proposition?
 - [\(3\)](#) Whether anything false can come under faith?
 - [\(4\)](#) Whether the object of faith can be anything seen?
 - [\(5\)](#) Whether it can be anything known?
 - [\(6\)](#) Whether the things to be believed should be divided into a certain number of articles?
 - [\(7\)](#) Whether the same articles are of faith for all times?
-

(9) Of the manner of embodying the articles in a symbol;

(10) Who has the right to propose a symbol of faith?

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Whether the object of faith is the First Truth?

Objection 1: It would seem that the object of faith is not the First Truth. For it seems that the object of faith is that which is proposed to us to be believed. Now not only things pertaining to the Godhead, i.e. the First Truth, are proposed to us to be believed, but also things concerning Christ's human nature, and the sacraments of the Church, and the condition of creatures. Therefore the object of faith is not only the First Truth.

Objection 2: Further, faith and unbelief have the same object since they are opposed to one another. Now unbelief can be about all things contained in Holy Writ, for whichever one of them a man denies, he is considered an unbeliever. Therefore faith also is about all things contained in Holy Writ. But there are many things therein, concerning man and other creatures. Therefore the object of faith is not only the First Truth, but also created truth.

Objection 3: Further, faith is condivided with charity, as stated above (FS, Question [62], Article [3]). Now by charity we love not only God, who is the sovereign Good, but also our neighbor. Therefore the object of Faith is not only the First Truth.

On the contrary, Dionysius says (Div. Nom. vii) that "faith is about the simple and everlasting truth." Now this is the First Truth. Therefore the object of faith is the First Truth.

I answer that, The object of every cognitive habit includes two things: first, that which is known materially, and is the material object, so to speak, and, secondly, that whereby it is known, which is the formal aspect of the object. Thus in the science of geometry, the conclusions are what is known materially, while the formal aspect of the science is the mean of demonstration, through which the conclusions are known.

Accordingly if we consider, in faith, the formal aspect of the object, it is nothing else than the First Truth. For the faith of which we are speaking, does not assent to anything, except because it is revealed by God. Hence the mean on which faith is based is the Divine Truth. If, however, we consider materially the things to which faith assents, they include not only God, but also many other things, which, nevertheless, do not come under the assent of faith, except as bearing some relation to God, in as much as, to wit, through certain effects of the Divine operation, man is helped on his journey towards the enjoyment of God. Consequently from this point of view also the object of faith is, in a way, the First Truth, in as much as nothing comes under faith except in relation to God, even as the object of the medical art is health, for it considers nothing save in relation to health.

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Church, or any creatures whatever, come under faith, in so far as by them we are directed to God, and in as much as we assent to them on account of the Divine Truth.

The same answer applies to the Second Objection, as regards all things contained in Holy Writ.

Reply to Objection 3: Charity also loves our neighbor on account of God, so that its object, properly speaking, is God, as we shall show further on ([Question \[25\]](#), [Article \[1\]](#)).

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Whether the object of faith is something complex, by way of a proposition?

Objection 1: It would seem that the object of faith is not something complex by way of a proposition. For the object of faith is the First Truth, as stated above ([Article \[1\]](#)). Now the First Truth is something simple. Therefore the object of faith is not something complex.

Objection 2: Further, the exposition of faith is contained in the symbol. Now the symbol does not contain propositions, but things: for it is not stated therein that God is almighty, but: "I believe in God... almighty." Therefore the object of faith is not a proposition but a thing.

Objection 3: Further, faith is succeeded by vision, according to 1 Cor. 13:12: "We see now through a glass in a dark manner; but then face to face. Now I know in part; but then I shall know even as I am known." But the object of the heavenly vision is something simple, for it is the Divine Essence. Therefore the faith of the wayfarer is also.

On the contrary, Faith is a mean between science and opinion. Now the mean is in the same genus as the extremes. Since, then, science and opinion are about propositions, it seems that faith is likewise about propositions; so that its object is something complex.

I answer that, The thing known is in the knower according to the mode of the knower. Now the mode proper to the human intellect is to know the truth by synthesis and analysis, as stated in the FP, Question [85], Article [5]. Hence things that are simple in themselves, are known by the intellect with a certain amount of complexity, just as on the other hand, the Divine intellect knows, without any complexity, things that are complex in themselves.

Accordingly the object of faith may be considered in two ways. First, as regards the thing itself which is believed, and thus the object of faith is something simple, namely the thing itself about which we have faith. Secondly, on the part of the believer, and in this respect the object of faith is something complex by way of a proposition.

Hence in the past both opinions have been held with a certain amount of truth.

Reply to Objection 1: This argument considers the object of faith on the part of the thing believed.

[Donate bitcoin.](#) St. Isidore [e-book library/forum](#) » [aquinas](#) » [english](#) » [summa](#) » [SS](#) » [SS001.html](#) act of the believer is terminated in them, as is evident from the manner of speaking about them. Now the act of the believer does not terminate in a proposition, but in a thing. For as in science we do not form propositions, except in order to have knowledge about things through their means, so is it in faith.

Reply to Objection 3: The object of the heavenly vision will be the First Truth seen in itself, according to 1 Jn. 3:2: "We know that when He shall appear, we shall be like to Him: because we shall see Him as He is": hence that vision will not be by way of a proposition but by way of a simple understanding. On the other hand, by faith, we do not apprehend the First Truth as it is in itself. Hence the comparison fails.

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Whether anything false can come under faith?

Objection 1: It would seem that something false can come under faith. For faith is condivided with hope and charity. Now something false can come under hope, since many hope to have eternal life, who will not obtain it. The same may be said of charity, for many are loved as being good, who, nevertheless, are not good. Therefore something false can be the object of faith.

Objection 2: Further, Abraham believed that Christ would be born, according to Jn. 8:56: "Abraham your father rejoiced that he might see My day: he saw it, and was glad." But after the time of Abraham, God might not have taken flesh, for it was merely because He willed that He did, so that what Abraham believed about Christ would have been false. Therefore the object of faith can be something false.

Objection 3: Further, the ancients believed in the future birth of Christ, and many continued so to believe, until they heard the preaching of the Gospel. Now, when once Christ was born, even before He began to preach, it was false that Christ was yet to be born. Therefore something false can come under faith.

Objection 4: Further, it is a matter of faith, that one should believe that the true Body of Christ is contained in the Sacrament of the altar. But it might happen that the bread was not rightly consecrated, and that there was not Christ's true Body there, but only bread. Therefore something false can come under faith.

On the contrary, No virtue that perfects the intellect is related to the false, considered as the evil of the intellect, as the Philosopher declares (Ethic. vi, 2). Now faith is a virtue that perfects the intellect, as we shall show further on ([Question \[4\]](#), [Articles \[2\]](#),5). Therefore nothing false can come under it.

I answer that, Nothing comes under any power, habit or act, except by means of the formal aspect of the object: thus color cannot be seen except by means of light, and a conclusion

[Donate bitcoin](#). St. Isidore [e-book library/forum](#) » [aquinas](#) » [english](#) » [summa](#) » [SS](#) » [SS001.html](#)^[1]) that the formal aspect of the object of faith is the First Truth; so that nothing can come under faith, save in so far as it stands under the First Truth, under which nothing false can stand, as neither can non-being stand under being, nor evil under goodness. It follows therefore that nothing false can come under faith.

Reply to Objection 1: Since the true is the good of the intellect, but not of the appetitive power, it follows that all virtues which perfect the intellect, exclude the false altogether, because it belongs to the nature of a virtue to bear relation to the good alone. On the other hand those virtues which perfect the appetitive faculty, do not entirely exclude the false, for it is possible to act in accordance with justice or temperance, while having a false opinion about what one is doing. Therefore, as faith perfects the intellect, whereas hope and charity perfect the appetitive part, the comparison between them fails.

Nevertheless neither can anything false come under hope, for a man hopes to obtain eternal life, not by his own power (since this would be an act of presumption), but with the help of grace; and if he perseveres therein he will obtain eternal life surely and infallibly.

In like manner it belongs to charity to love God, wherever He may be; so that it matters not to charity, whether God be in the individual whom we love for God's sake.

Reply to Objection 2: That "God would not take flesh," considered in itself was possible even after Abraham's time, but in so far as it stands in God's foreknowledge, it has a certain necessity of infallibility, as explained in the FP, Question [14], Articles [13],15: and it is thus that it comes under faith. Hence in so far as it comes under faith, it cannot be false.

Reply to Objection 3: After Christ's birth, to believe in Him, was to believe in Christ's birth at some time or other. The fixing of the time, wherein some were deceived was not due to their faith, but to a human conjecture. For it is possible for a believer to have a false opinion through a human conjecture, but it is quite impossible for a false opinion to be the outcome of faith.

Reply to Objection 4: The faith of the believer is not directed to such and such accidents of bread, but to the fact that the true body of Christ is under the appearances of sensible bread, when it is rightly consecrated. Hence if it be not rightly consecrated, it does not follow that anything false comes under faith.

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Whether the object of faith can be something seen?

Objection 1: It would seem that the object of faith is something seen. For Our Lord said to Thomas ([Jn. 20:29](#)): "Because thou hast seen Me, Thomas, thou hast believed." Therefore vision and faith regard the same object.

"We see now through a glass in a dark manner." Therefore what is believed is seen.

Objection 3: Further, faith is a spiritual light. Now something is seen under every light. Therefore faith is of things seen.

Objection 4: Further, "Every sense is a kind of sight," as Augustine states (De Verb. Domini, Sermon xxxiii). But faith is of things heard, according to Rm. 10:17: "Faith... cometh by hearing." Therefore faith is of things seen.

On the contrary, The Apostle says ([Heb. 11:1](#)) that "faith is the evidence of things that appear not."

I answer that, Faith implies assent of the intellect to that which is believed. Now the intellect assents to a thing in two ways. First, through being moved to assent by its very object, which is known either by itself (as in the case of first principles, which are held by the habit of understanding), or through something else already known (as in the case of conclusions which are held by the habit of science). Secondly the intellect assents to something, not through being sufficiently moved to this assent by its proper object, but through an act of choice, whereby it turns voluntarily to one side rather than to the other: and if this be accompanied by doubt or fear of the opposite side, there will be opinion, while, if there be certainty and no fear of the other side, there will be faith.

Now those things are said to be seen which, of themselves, move the intellect or the senses to knowledge of them. Wherefore it is evident that neither faith nor opinion can be of things seen either by the senses or by the intellect.

Reply to Objection 1: Thomas "saw one thing, and believed another" [*St. Gregory: Hom. xxvi in Evang.]: he saw the Man, and believing Him to be God, he made profession of his faith, saying: "My Lord and my God."

Reply to Objection 2: Those things which come under faith can be considered in two ways. First, in particular; and thus they cannot be seen and believed at the same time, as shown above. Secondly, in general, that is, under the common aspect of credibility; and in this way they are seen by the believer. For he would not believe unless, on the evidence of signs, or of something similar, he saw that they ought to be believed.

Reply to Objection 3: The light of faith makes us see what we believe. For just as, by the habits of the other virtues, man sees what is becoming to him in respect of that habit, so, by the habit of faith, the human mind is directed to assent to such things as are becoming to a right faith, and not to assent to others.

Reply to Objection 4: Hearing is of words signifying what is of faith, but not of the things themselves that are believed; hence it does not follow that these things are seen.

is certain knowledge of a demonstrated conclusion through its demonstration]?

Objection 1: It would seem that those things that are of faith can be an object of science. For where science is lacking there is ignorance, since ignorance is the opposite of science. Now we are not in ignorance of those things we have to believe, since ignorance of such things savors of unbelief, according to 1 Tim. 1:13: "I did it ignorantly in unbelief." Therefore things that are of faith can be an object of science.

Objection 2: Further, science is acquired by reasons. Now sacred writers employ reasons to inculcate things that are of faith. Therefore such things can be an object of science.

Objection 3: Further, things which are demonstrated are an object of science, since a "demonstration is a syllogism that produces science." Now certain matters of faith have been demonstrated by the philosophers, such as the Existence and Unity of God, and so forth. Therefore things that are of faith can be an object of science.

Objection 4: Further, opinion is further from science than faith is, since faith is said to stand between opinion and science. Now opinion and science can, in a way, be about the same object, as stated in Poster. i. Therefore faith and science can be about the same object also.

On the contrary, Gregory says (Hom. xxvi in Evang.) that "when a thing is manifest, it is the object, not of faith, but of perception." Therefore things that are of faith are not the object of perception, whereas what is an object of science is the object of perception. Therefore there can be no faith about things which are an object of science.

I answer that, All science is derived from self-evident and therefore "seen" principles; wherefore all objects of science must needs be, in a fashion, seen.

Now as stated above ([Article \[4\]](#)), it is impossible that one and the same thing should be believed and seen by the same person. Hence it is equally impossible for one and the same thing to be an object of science and of belief for the same person. It may happen, however, that a thing which is an object of vision or science for one, is believed by another: since we hope to see some day what we now believe about the Trinity, according to 1 Cor. 13:12: "We see now through a glass in a dark manner; but then face to face": which vision the angels possess already; so that what we believe, they see. In like manner it may happen that what is an object of vision or scientific knowledge for one man, even in the state of a wayfarer, is, for another man, an object of faith, because he does not know it by demonstration.

Nevertheless that which is proposed to be believed equally by all, is equally unknown by all as an object of science: such are the things which are of faith simply. Consequently faith and science are not about the same things.

Reply to Objection 1: Unbelievers are in ignorance of things that are of faith, for neither do they see or know them in themselves, nor do they know them to be credible. The faithful, on the other hand, know them, not as by demonstration, but by the light of faith which makes them see that they ought to believe them, as stated above ([Article \[4\]](#), ad 2,3).

[Donate bitcoin](#). St. Isidore [e-book library/forum](#) » [aquinas](#) » [english](#) » [summa](#) » [SS](#) » [SS001.html](#) are not demonstrations; they are either persuasive arguments showing that what is proposed to our faith is not impossible, or else they are proofs drawn from the principles of faith, i.e. from the authority of Holy Writ, as Dionysius declares (Div. Nom. ii). Whatever is based on these principles is as well proved in the eyes of the faithful, as a conclusion drawn from self-evident principles is in the eyes of all. Hence again, theology is a science, as we stated at the outset of this work ([FP](#), [Question \[1\]](#), [Article \[2\]](#)).

Reply to Objection 3: Things which can be proved by demonstration are reckoned among the articles of faith, not because they are believed simply by all, but because they are a necessary presupposition to matters of faith, so that those who do not know them by demonstration must know them first of all by faith.

Reply to Objection 4: As the Philosopher says (Poster. i), "science and opinion about the same object can certainly be in different men," as we have stated above about science and faith; yet it is possible for one and the same man to have science and faith about the same thing relatively, i.e. in relation to the object, but not in the same respect. For it is possible for the same person, about one and the same object, to know one thing and to think another: and, in like manner, one may know by demonstration the unity of the Godhead, and, by faith, the Trinity. On the other hand, in one and the same man, about the same object, and in the same respect, science is incompatible with either opinion or faith, yet for different reasons. Because science is incompatible with opinion about the same object simply, for the reason that science demands that its object should be deemed impossible to be otherwise, whereas it is essential to opinion, that its object should be deemed possible to be otherwise. Yet that which is the object of faith, on account of the certainty of faith, is also deemed impossible to be otherwise; and the reason why science and faith cannot be about the same object and in the same respect is because the object of science is something seen whereas the object of faith is the unseen, as stated above.

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Whether those things that are of faith should be divided into certain articles?

Objection 1: It would seem that those things that are of faith should not be divided into certain articles. For all things contained in Holy Writ are matters of faith. But these, by reason of their multitude, cannot be reduced to a certain number. Therefore it seems superfluous to distinguish certain articles of faith.

Objection 2: Further, material differences can be multiplied indefinitely, and therefore art should take no notice of them. Now the formal aspect of the object of faith is one and indivisible, as stated above ([Article \[1\]](#)), viz. the First Truth, so that matters of faith cannot be distinguished in respect of their formal object. Therefore no notice should be taken of a material division of matters of faith into articles.

[Donate bitcoin](#). St. Isidore [e-book library/forum](#) » [aquinas](#) » [english](#) » [summa](#) » [SS](#) » [SS001.html](#) "an article is an indivisible truth concerning God, exacting [arctans] our belief." Now belief is a voluntary act, since, as Augustine says (Tract. xxvi in Joan.), "no man believes against his will." Therefore it seems that matters of faith should not be divided into articles.

On the contrary, Isidore says: "An article is a glimpse of Divine truth, tending thereto." Now we can only get a glimpse of Divine truth by way of analysis, since things which in God are one, are manifold in our intellect. Therefore matters of faith should be divided into articles.

I answer that, the word "article" is apparently derived from the Greek; for the Greek {arthron} [*Cf. William of Auxerre, Summa Aurea] which the Latin renders "articulus," signifies a fitting together of distinct parts: wherefore the small parts of the body which fit together are called the articulations of the limbs. Likewise, in the Greek grammar, articles are parts of speech which are affixed to words to show their gender, number or case. Again in rhetoric, articles are parts that fit together in a sentence, for Tully says (Rhet. iv) that an article is composed of words each pronounced singly and separately, thus: "Your passion, your voice, your look, have struck terror into your foes."

Hence matters of Christian faith are said to contain distinct articles, in so far as they are divided into parts, and fit together. Now the object of faith is something unseen in connection with God, as stated above ([Article \[4\]](#)). Consequently any matter that, for a special reason, is unseen, is a special article; whereas when several matters are known or not known, under the same aspect, we are not to distinguish various articles. Thus one encounters one difficulty in seeing that God suffered, and another in seeing that He rose again from the dead, wherefore the article of the Resurrection is distinct from the article of the Passion. But that He suffered, died and was buried, present the same difficulty, so that if one be accepted, it is not difficult to accept the others; wherefore all these belong to one article.

Reply to Objection 1: Some things are proposed to our belief are in themselves of faith, while others are of faith, not in themselves but only in relation to others: even as in sciences certain propositions are put forward on their own account, while others are put forward in order to manifest others. Now, since the chief object of faith consists in those things which we hope to see, according to Heb. 11:2: "Faith is the substance of things to be hoped for," it follows that those things are in themselves of faith, which order us directly to eternal life. Such are the Trinity of Persons in Almighty God [*The Leonine Edition reads: The Three Persons, the omnipotence of God, etc.], the mystery of Christ's Incarnation, and the like: and these are distinct articles of faith. On the other hand certain things in Holy Writ are proposed to our belief, not chiefly on their own account, but for the manifestation of those mentioned above: for instance, that Abraham had two sons, that a dead man rose again at the touch of Eliseus' bones, and the like, which are related in Holy Writ for the purpose of manifesting the Divine mystery or the Incarnation of Christ: and such things should not form distinct articles.

Reply to Objection 2: The formal aspect of the object of faith can be taken in two ways: first, on the part of the thing believed, and thus there is one formal aspect of all matters of faith, viz. the First Truth: and from this point of view there is no distinction of articles. Secondly, the formal aspect of matters of faith, can be considered from our point of view; and thus the formal aspect of a matter of faith is that it is something unseen; and from this point of view there are various distinct articles of faith, as we saw above.

Reply to Objection 3: This definition of an article is taken from an etymology of the word as derived from the Latin, rather than in accordance with its real meaning, as derived from the Greek: hence it does not carry much weight. Yet even then it could be said that although faith

Whether the articles of faith have increased in course of time?

Objection 1: It would seem that the articles of faith have not increased in course of time. Because, as the Apostle says ([Heb. 11:1](#)), "faith is the substance of things to be hoped for." Now the same things are to be hoped for at all times. Therefore, at all times, the same things are to be believed.

Objection 2: Further, development has taken place, in sciences devised by man, on account of the lack of knowledge in those who discovered them, as the Philosopher observes (Metaph. ii). Now the doctrine of faith was not devised by man, but was delivered to us by God, as stated in Eph. 2:8: "It is the gift of God." Since then there can be no lack of knowledge in God, it seems that knowledge of matters of faith was perfect from the beginning and did not increase as time went on.

Objection 3: Further, the operation of grace proceeds in orderly fashion no less than the operation of nature. Now nature always makes a beginning with perfect things, as Boethius states (De Consol. iii). Therefore it seems that the operation of grace also began with perfect things, so that those who were the first to deliver the faith, knew it most perfectly.

Objection 4: Further, just as the faith of Christ was delivered to us through the apostles, so too, in the Old Testament, the knowledge of faith was delivered by the early fathers to those who came later, according to Dt. 32:7: "Ask thy father, and he will declare to thee." Now the apostles were most fully instructed about the mysteries, for "they received them more fully than others, even as they received them earlier," as a gloss says on Rm. 8:23: "Ourselves also who have the first fruits of the Spirit." Therefore it seems that knowledge of matters of faith has not increased as time went on.

On the contrary, Gregory says (Hom. xvi in Ezech.) that "the knowledge of the holy fathers increased as time went on... and the nearer they were to Our Savior's coming, the more fully did they received the mysteries of salvation."

I answer that, The articles of faith stand in the same relation to the doctrine of faith, as self-evident principles to a teaching based on natural reason. Among these principles there is a certain order, so that some are contained implicitly in others; thus all principles are reduced, as to their first principle, to this one: "The same thing cannot be affirmed and denied at the same time," as the Philosopher states (Metaph. iv, text. 9). In like manner all the articles are contained implicitly in certain primary matters of faith, such as God's existence, and His providence over the salvation of man, according to Heb. 11: "He that cometh to God, must believe that He is, and is a rewarder to them that seek Him." For the existence of God includes

[Donate bitcoin](#). St. Isidore [e-book library/forum](#) » [aquinas](#) » [english](#) » [summa](#) » [SS](#) » [SS001.html](#) If in His providence includes all those things which God dispenses in time, for man's salvation, and which are the way to that happiness: and in this way, again, some of those articles which follow from these are contained in others: thus faith in the Redemption of mankind includes belief in the Incarnation of Christ, His Passion and so forth.

Accordingly we must conclude that, as regards the substance of the articles of faith, they have not received any increase as time went on: since whatever those who lived later have believed, was contained, albeit implicitly, in the faith of those Fathers who preceded them. But there was an increase in the number of articles believed explicitly, since to those who lived in later times some were known explicitly which were not known explicitly by those who lived before them. Hence the Lord said to Moses ([Ex. 6:2,3](#)): "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob [*Vulg.: 'I am the Lord that appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob']... and My name Adonai I did not show them": David also said ([Ps. 118:100](#)): "I have had understanding above ancients": and the Apostle says ([Eph. 3:5](#)) that the mystery of Christ, "in other generations was not known, as it is now revealed to His holy apostles and prophets."

Reply to Objection 1: Among men the same things were always to be hoped for from Christ. But as they did not acquire this hope save through Christ, the further they were removed from Christ in point of time, the further they were from obtaining what they hoped for. Hence the Apostle says ([Heb. 11:13](#)): "All these died according to faith, not having received the promises, but beholding them afar off." Now the further off a thing is the less distinctly it is seen; wherefore those who were nigh to Christ's advent had a more distinct knowledge of the good things to be hoped for.

Reply to Objection 2: Progress in knowledge occurs in two ways. First, on the part of the teacher, be he one or many, who makes progress in knowledge as time goes on: and this is the kind of progress that takes place in sciences devised by man. Secondly, on the part of the learner; thus the master, who has perfect knowledge of the art, does not deliver it all at once to his disciple from the very outset, for he would not be able to take it all in, but he condescends to the disciple's capacity and instructs him little by little. It is in this way that men made progress in the knowledge of faith as time went on. Hence the Apostle ([Gal. 3:24](#)) compares the state of the Old Testament to childhood.

Reply to Objection 3: Two causes are requisite before actual generation can take place, an agent, namely, and matter. In the order of the active cause, the more perfect is naturally first; and in this way nature makes a beginning with perfect things, since the imperfect is not brought to perfection, except by something perfect already in existence. On the other hand, in the order of the material cause, the imperfect comes first, and in this way nature proceeds from the imperfect to the perfect. Now in the manifestation of faith, God is the active cause, having perfect knowledge from all eternity; while man is likened to matter in receiving the influx of God's action. Hence, among men, the knowledge of faith had to proceed from imperfection to perfection; and, although some men have been after the manner of active causes, through being doctors of faith, nevertheless the manifestation of the Spirit is given to such men for the common good, according to 1 Cor. 12:7; so that the knowledge of faith was imparted to the Fathers who were instructors in the faith, so far as was necessary at the time for the instruction of the people, either openly or in figures.

Reply to Objection 4: The ultimate consummation of grace was effected by Christ, wherefore the time of His coming is called the "time of fulness [*Vulg.: 'fulness of time']" ([Gal. 4:4](#)). Hence those who were nearest to Christ, wherefore before, like John the Baptist, or after, like the apostles, had a fuller knowledge of the mysteries of faith; for even with regard to man's state

Whether the articles of faith are suitably formulated?

Objection 1: It would seem that the articles of faith are unsuitably formulated. For those things, which can be known by demonstration, do not belong to faith as to an object of belief for all, as stated above ([Article \[5\]](#)). Now it can be known by demonstration that there is one God; hence the Philosopher proves this (Metaph. xii, text. 52) and many other philosophers demonstrated the same truth. Therefore that "there is one God" should not be set down as an article of faith.

Objection 2: Further, just as it is necessary to faith that we should believe God to be almighty, so is it too that we should believe Him to be "all-knowing" and "provident for all," about both of which points some have erred. Therefore, among the articles of faith, mention should have been made of God's wisdom and providence, even as of His omnipotence.

Objection 3: Further, to know the Father is the same things as to know the Son, according to Jn. 14:9: "He that seeth Me, seeth the Father also." Therefore there ought to be but one article about the Father and Son, and, for the same reason, about the Holy Ghost.

Objection 4: Further, the Person of the Father is no less than the Person of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Now there are several articles about the Person of the Holy Ghost, and likewise about the Person of the Son. Therefore there should be several articles about the Person of the Father.

Objection 5: Further, just as certain things are said by appropriation, of the Person of the Father and of the Person of the Holy Ghost, so too is something appropriated to the Person of the Son, in respect of His Godhead. Now, among the articles of faith, a place is given to a work appropriated to the Father, viz. the creation, and likewise, a work appropriated to the Holy Ghost, viz. that "He spoke by the prophets." Therefore the articles of faith should contain some work appropriated to the Son in respect of His Godhead.

Objection 6: Further, the sacrament of the Eucharist presents a special difficulty over and above the other articles. Therefore it should have been mentioned in a special article: and consequently it seems that there is not a sufficient number of articles.

On the contrary stands the authority of the Church who formulates the articles thus.

I answer that, As stated above ([Articles \[4\],6](#)), to faith those things in themselves belong, the sight of which we shall enjoy in eternal life, and by which we are brought to eternal life. Now two things are proposed to us to be seen in eternal life: viz. the secret of the Godhead, to see which is to possess happiness; and the mystery of Christ's Incarnation, "by Whom we have

[Donate bitcoin](#). St. Isidore [e-book library/forum](#) » [aquinas](#) » [english](#) » [summa](#) » [SS](#) » [SS001.html](#) his is eternal life: that they may know Thee, the... true God, and Jesus Christ Whom Thou hast sent." Wherefore the first distinction in matters of faith is that some concern the majesty of the Godhead, while others pertain to the mystery of Christ's human nature, which is the "mystery of godliness" ([1 Tim. 3:16](#)).

Now with regard to the majesty of the Godhead, three things are proposed to our belief: first, the unity of the Godhead, to which the first article refers; secondly, the trinity of the Persons, to which three articles refer, corresponding to the three Persons; and thirdly, the works proper to the Godhead, the first of which refers to the order of nature, in relation to which the article about the creation is proposed to us; the second refers to the order of grace, in relation to which all matters concerning the sanctification of man are included in one article; while the third refers to the order of glory, and in relation to this another article is proposed to us concerning the resurrection of the dead and life everlasting. Thus there are seven articles referring to the Godhead.

In like manner, with regard to Christ's human nature, there are seven articles, the first of which refers to Christ's incarnation or conception; the second, to His virginal birth; the third, to His Passion, death and burial; the fourth, to His descent into hell; the fifth, to His resurrection; the sixth, to His ascension; the seventh, to His coming for the judgment, so that in all there are fourteen articles.

Some, however, distinguish twelve articles, six pertaining to the Godhead, and six to the humanity. For they include in one article the three about the three Persons; because we have one knowledge of the three Persons: while they divide the article referring to the work of glorification into two, viz. the resurrection of the body, and the glory of the soul. Likewise they unite the conception and nativity into one article.

Reply to Objection 1: By faith we hold many truths about God, which the philosophers were unable to discover by natural reason, for instance His providence and omnipotence, and that He alone is to be worshiped, all of which are contained in the one article of the unity of God.

Reply to Objection 2: The very name of the Godhead implies a kind of watching over things, as stated in the FP, Question [13], Article [8]. Now in beings having an intellect, power does not work save by the will and knowledge. Hence God's omnipotence includes, in a way, universal knowledge and providence. For He would not be able to do all He wills in things here below, unless He knew them, and exercised His providence over them.

Reply to Objection 3: We have but one knowledge of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, as to the unity of the Essence, to which the first article refers: but, as to the distinction of the Persons, which is by the relations of origin, knowledge of the Father does indeed, in a way, include knowledge of the Son, for He would not be Father, had He not a Son; the bond whereof being the Holy Ghost. From this point of view, there was a sufficient motive for those who referred one article to the three Persons. Since, however, with regard to each Person, certain points have to be observed, about which some happen to fall into error, looking at it in this way, we may distinguish three articles about the three Persons. For Arius believed in the omnipotence and eternity of the Father, but did not believe the Son to be co-equal and consubstantial with the Father; hence the need for an article about the Person of the Son in order to settle this point. In like manner it was necessary to appoint a third article about the Person of the Holy Ghost, against Macedonius. In the same way Christ's conception and birth, just as the resurrection and life everlasting, can from one point of view be united together in one article,

Reply to Objection 4: It belongs to the Son and Holy Ghost to be sent to sanctify the creature; and about this several things have to be believed. Hence it is that there are more articles about the Persons of the Son and Holy Ghost than about the Person of the Father, Who is never sent, as we stated in the FP, Question [43], Article [4].

Reply to Objection 5: The sanctification of a creature by grace, and its consummation by glory, is also effected by the gift of charity, which is appropriated to the Holy Ghost, and by the gift of wisdom, which is appropriated to the Son: so that each work belongs by appropriation, but under different aspects, both to the Son and to the Holy Ghost.

Reply to Objection 6: Two things may be considered in the sacrament of the Eucharist. One is the fact that it is a sacrament, and in this respect it is like the other effects of sanctifying grace. The other is that Christ's body is miraculously contained therein and thus it is included under God's omnipotence, like all other miracles which are ascribed to God's almighty power.

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Whether it is suitable for the articles of faith to be embodied in a symbol?

Objection 1: It would seem that it is unsuitable for the articles of faith to be embodied in a symbol. Because Holy Writ is the rule of faith, to which no addition or subtraction can lawfully be made, since it is written ([Dt. 4:2](#)): "You shall not add to the word that I speak to you, neither shall you take away from it." Therefore it was unlawful to make a symbol as a rule of faith, after the Holy Writ had once been published.

Objection 2: Further, according to the Apostle ([Eph. 4:5](#)) there is but "one faith." Now the symbol is a profession of faith. Therefore it is not fitting that there should be more than one symbol.

Objection 3: Further, the confession of faith, which is contained in the symbol, concerns all the faithful. Now the faithful are not all competent to believe in God, but only those who have living faith. Therefore it is unfitting for the symbol of faith to be expressed in the words: "I believe in one God."

Objection 4: Further, the descent into hell is one of the articles of faith, as stated above ([Article \[8\]](#)). But the descent into hell is not mentioned in the symbol of the Fathers. Therefore the latter is expressed inadequately.

Objection 5: Further, Augustine (Tract. xxix in Joan.) expounding the passage, "You believe in God, believe also in Me" ([Jn. 14:1](#)) says: "We believe Peter or Paul, but we speak only of believing 'in' God." Since then the Catholic Church is merely a created being, it seems unfitting to say: "In the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church."

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ought to be proposed to all, and that publicly. Therefore every symbol, besides the symbol of the Fathers, should be sung at Mass. Therefore it seems unfitting to publish the articles of faith in a symbol.

On the contrary, The universal Church cannot err, since she is governed by the Holy Ghost, Who is the Spirit of truth: for such was Our Lord's promise to His disciples ([Jn. 16:13](#)): "When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will teach you all truth." Now the symbol is published by the authority of the universal Church. Therefore it contains nothing defective.

I answer that, As the Apostle says ([Heb. 11:6](#)), "he that cometh to God, must believe that He is." Now a man cannot believe, unless the truth be proposed to him that he may believe it. Hence the need for the truth of faith to be collected together, so that it might the more easily be proposed to all, lest anyone might stray from the truth through ignorance of the faith. It is from its being a collection of maxims of faith that the symbol [*The Greek {symballein}] takes its name.

Reply to Objection 1: The truth of faith is contained in Holy Writ, diffusely, under various modes of expression, and sometimes obscurely, so that, in order to gather the truth of faith from Holy Writ, one needs long study and practice, which are unattainable by all those who require to know the truth of faith, many of whom have no time for study, being busy with other affairs. And so it was necessary to gather together a clear summary from the sayings of Holy Writ, to be proposed to the belief of all. This indeed was no addition to Holy Writ, but something taken from it.

Reply to Objection 2: The same doctrine of faith is taught in all the symbols. Nevertheless, the people need more careful instruction about the truth of faith, when errors arise, lest the faith of simple-minded persons be corrupted by heretics. It was this that gave rise to the necessity of formulating several symbols, which nowise differ from one another, save that on account of the obstinacy of heretics, one contains more explicitly what another contains implicitly.

Reply to Objection 3: The confession of faith is drawn up in a symbol in the person, as it were, of the whole Church, which is united together by faith. Now the faith of the Church is living faith; since such is the faith to be found in all those who are of the Church not only outwardly but also by merit. Hence the confession of faith is expressed in a symbol, in a manner that is in keeping with living faith, so that even if some of the faithful lack living faith, they should endeavor to acquire it.

Reply to Objection 4: No error about the descent into hell had arisen among heretics, so that there was no need to be more explicit on that point. For this reason it is not repeated in the symbol of the Fathers, but is supposed as already settled in the symbol of the Apostles. For a subsequent symbol does not cancel a preceding one; rather does it expound it, as stated above (ad 2).

Reply to Objection 5: If we say: "'In' the holy Catholic Church," this must be taken as verified in so far as our faith is directed to the Holy Ghost, Who sanctifies the Church; so that the sense is: "I believe in the Holy Ghost sanctifying the Church." But it is better and more in keeping with the common use, to omit the 'in,' and say simply, "the holy Catholic Church," as Pope Leo [*Rufinus, Comm. in Sym. Apost.] observes.

Reply to Objection 6: Since the symbol of the Fathers is an explanation of the symbol of the Apostles, and was drawn up after the faith was already spread abroad, and when the Church

Apostles, which was drawn up at the time of persecution, before the faith was made public, is said secretly at Prime and Compline, as though it were against the darkness of past and future errors.

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Whether it belongs to the Sovereign Pontiff to draw up a symbol of faith?

Objection 1: It would seem that it does not belong to the Sovereign Pontiff to draw up a symbol of faith. For a new edition of the symbol becomes necessary in order to explain the articles of faith, as stated above ([Article \[9\]](#)). Now, in the Old Testament, the articles of faith were more and more explained as time went on, by reason of the truth of faith becoming clearer through greater nearness to Christ, as stated above ([Article \[7\]](#)). Since then this reason ceased with the advent of the New Law, there is no need for the articles of faith to be more and more explicit. Therefore it does not seem to belong to the authority of the Sovereign Pontiff to draw up a new edition of the symbol.

Objection 2: Further, no man has the power to do what is forbidden under pain of anathema by the universal Church. Now it was forbidden under pain of anathema by the universal Church, to make a new edition of the symbol. For it is stated in the acts of the first* council of Ephesus (P. ii, Act. 6) that "after the symbol of the Nicene council had been read through, the holy synod decreed that it was unlawful to utter, write or draw up any other creed, than that which was defined by the Fathers assembled at Nicaea together with the Holy Ghost," and this under pain of anathema. [*St. Thomas wrote 'first' (expunged by Nicolai) to distinguish it from the other council, A.D. 451, known as the "Latrocinium" and condemned by the Pope.] The same was repeated in the acts of the council of Chalcedon (P. ii, Act. 5). Therefore it seems that the Sovereign Pontiff has no authority to publish a new edition of the symbol.

Objection 3: Further, Athanasius was not the Sovereign Pontiff, but patriarch of Alexandria, and yet he published a symbol which is sung in the Church. Therefore it does not seem to belong to the Sovereign Pontiff any more than to other bishops, to publish a new edition of the symbol.

On the contrary, The symbol was drawn up by a general council. Now such a council cannot be convoked otherwise than by the authority of the Sovereign Pontiff, as stated in the Decretals [*Dist. xvii, Can. 4,5]. Therefore it belongs to the authority of the Sovereign Pontiff to draw up a symbol.

I answer that, As stated above (OBJ 1), a new edition of the symbol becomes necessary in order to set aside the errors that may arise. Consequently to publish a new edition of the symbol belongs to that authority which is empowered to decide matters of faith finally, so that they may be held by all with unshaken faith. Now this belongs to the authority of the Sovereign Pontiff, "to whom the more important and more difficult questions that arise in the Church are referred," as stated in the Decretals [*Dist. xvii, Can. 5]. Hence our Lord said to Peter whom he

[Donate bitcoin](#). St. Isidore [e-book library/forum](#) » [aquinas](#) » [english](#) » [summa](#) » [SS](#) » [SS001.html](#)ld thou, being once converted, confirm thy brethren." The reason of this is that there should be but one faith of the whole Church, according to 1 Cor. 1:10: "That you all speak the same thing, and that there be no schisms among you": and this could not be secured unless any question of faith that may arise be decided by him who presides over the whole Church, so that the whole Church may hold firmly to his decision. Consequently it belongs to the sole authority of the Sovereign Pontiff to publish a new edition of the symbol, as do all other matters which concern the whole Church, such as to convoke a general council and so forth.

Reply to Objection 1: The truth of faith is sufficiently explicit in the teaching of Christ and the apostles. But since, according to 2 Pt. 3:16, some men are so evil-minded as to pervert the apostolic teaching and other doctrines and Scriptures to their own destruction, it was necessary as time went on to express the faith more explicitly against the errors which arose.

Reply to Objection 2: This prohibition and sentence of the council was intended for private individuals, who have no business to decide matters of faith: for this decision of the general council did not take away from a subsequent council the power of drawing up a new edition of the symbol, containing not indeed a new faith, but the same faith with greater explicitness. For every council has taken into account that a subsequent council would expound matters more fully than the preceding council, if this became necessary through some heresy arising. Consequently this belongs to the Sovereign Pontiff, by whose authority the council is convoked, and its decision confirmed.

Reply to Objection 3: Athanasius drew up a declaration of faith, not under the form of a symbol, but rather by way of an exposition of doctrine, as appears from his way of speaking. But since it contained briefly the whole truth of faith, it was accepted by the authority of the Sovereign Pontiff, so as to be considered as a rule of faith.