

Article

Saint Ambrose of Milan [337 (340?)–397], *Explanatio symboli*—The Present Value of the Ambrosian Dogmatic Message

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Abstract

Explanatio symboli, a true Christian pedagogy lesson, is attributed to Saint Ambrose of Milan. It was established 1700 years after the Synod of Nicaea, in which the first seven confessional articles of the Orthodox Creed were written. In the current religious context, it aims to resurrect the baptismal faith that was so manifest in the Milanese environment within the first few centuries after the persecutions came to an end. To the great bishop of the Century IV Occident, the Baptism and the doxological confession of the All-Holy Trinity, alongside the Trinitarian doxology, were empirical realities within ecclesial life, and were also associated with the experience of grace in the Trinitarian communion. This was imperative, especially in the context of defending the right-faith against the Arianism's attacks, whose infiltration spread all the way to the Western borders of the Roman Empire. To Saint Ambrose, as to us living today, life in Christ—shaped by confessing the Trinitarian faith and through Baptism—is one that enlightens humanity to become Christo-morphic until the last moment of our life here, and this is the true existential meaning whose efficacy and reality lead us towards His Kingdom.

Keywords: Arianism; Baptism; Christology; Church; eternal life; mission; pneumatology; symbol of faith; Trinity



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1. Introduction

In Eastern spirituality, the Church has not separated dogma from life, theology from ecclesiology, or creed from deed, so these concepts can be found both in the ecclesial communion space and in the daily life of the Christian believer. Still, sadly, they can be separated only by two factors: heresy and schism. Heresy is a separation of life from the teaching of the Embodied Truth, while the schism is a violation of the sincere love for the Church, whose Head is Christ.

This study has a good applicability regarding the dogmatic catechesis of the missionary message that the Church conveys in both intra- and extra-ecclesial spaces. The exegetical commentaries of Saint Ambrose, referring to the Symbol of Faith, remain relevant in the context of postmodern society which, as it is surrounded by syncretistic religious systems, has the opportunity to rediscover an original Christian confession of faith, which has been an inexhaustible source for the doctrinal system and remains so to this day.

This study comments on the Symbol of Faith, and the extent to which it was perceived in the Western environment after the Synod I from Nicaea from the year 325. It was used by Saint Ambrose of Milan [337 (340?)–397] in the context of officiating the Holy Mysteries, and particularly the Mystery of the Holy Baptism, as a form of catechetical preparation for

those wishing to convert from their pagan or heretic religion to the true life ([Saint Ambrose of Milan 2021](#)) of Christ.

This research aims to answer the following questions: How can today's Christian faith be certified in relation to the events of the Arian crisis of the 4th century that took place in Milan? What were the theological and social effects of the religious–moral personality of Saint Ambrose with regard to resolving the crisis? What message does the treatise *Explanatio Symboli* convey regarding the life and mission of the Church at the beginning of the third millennium?

There is an indestructible connection between confessing one's faith in the Tripersonal God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and in the Mystery of the Holy Baptism. It was equally obvious in the works of the Holy Fathers from the East and West, and it was part of the *traditio symboli* as a practice of The One Church. Until now, uncovering these mysteries has been the purview of those who are interested in seeking knowledge. Evaluations have been made based on the fear of an uncleanness of the body. Exorcism has been investigated and used a means for sanctifying not just the body, but the soul. Now is the time and the hour for us to convey the tradition of the symbol; it is a spiritual sign, the object of our heart's reflection, and an present shield. It is truly our most intimate treasure ([Saint Ambrose of Milan 1961b](#)).

In this context, a brief recount of *Explanatio symboli* has to be considered in the context of the vast treaty *De sacramentis*, comprises a series of testimonies addressed by a copyist to the readers who had already ([Saint Ambrose of Milan 1994a](#), pp. 9–25) become his speeches' auditory, and who had been blessed by the bath of the Holy Baptism.

2. The Context of the Critical Editions

We wish to specify from the beginning that the text itself is not solely composed of the critical editions of the works of Saint Ambrose, and even in the Latin Patrology, one can find this text as an appendix (LP vol. 17, col. 1155 and the following text). The critical text of *Explanatio symboli* that we refer to in this paper which was authored by Bernard Botte, can be found in the Collection Sources Chrétiennes, in Ambroise de Milan, des sacramentes, des mystères. Nouvelles édition revue et augmenté de L'explication du Symbole, Les Éditions du CERF, Paris 1961, vol. 29, pp. 46–59. It is a LatinFrench bilingual text based on two preserved manuscripts: Saint-Gall 188 (Centuries VII–VIII) and Vatican 5760 (Centuries IX–X).

The authenticity of the two works which exhibit a functional interdependency has never previously been questioned, as their Ambrosian paternity is easily deduced from both the style and the language used ([Botte 1961](#), p. 10). The life of Saint Ambrose ([Labriolle 1908](#)) is relatively well-known, especially with regard to his activity as Bishop of Milan. He was elected directly from his state as catechumen in the year 373 A.D., when he was 40 years old, and then he was baptized on 24th of November and ordained on 7th of December. This led to his firm insistence on the preparation stages of those wishing to become Christians and his similar emphasis on the determinant role of the confession of faith ([Toom 2015](#))—the Creed—which was circulating in the form of Nicaea I, in the environment of Occidental spirituality, meaning that it was found within the first seven articles.

There are enough arguments in favor of attributing Ambrosian paternity to the work *Explanatio symboli*. Two preserved manuscripts, Saint-Gall 188 and Vatican 5760, are the best proof of *De sacramentis* and, in both of them, *Explanatio* precedes in an unmediated manner ([Botte 1961](#)). As a transcript and prologue to *De sacramentis*, a collection of oral sermons belonging to Saint Ambrose, *Explanatio* specifies the gestures and the deeds of the bishop, with the same thinking style as the exposition.

Saint Ambrose was a defender of the rites, the Symbol of Faith being a part of the Baptism which differed a little from that officiated in the empire's capital. For instance, there were differing ideas on what constituted the washing of the feet in the Roman Church this was not criticized by Bishop Ambrose, despite the Roman practice being a continuation of the baptismal tire. In *De sacramentis* III, 5-6 (Saint Ambrose of Milan 1961b), he did not criticize what the Romans were doing, but he defended what was being done in Milan: *Non ignoramus quod ecclesia Romana hanc consuetudinem non habeat, cuius typum in omnibus sequimur et formam. . . .Hoc ideo dico non quo ergo alios reprehendam, sed mea officia ipse commendem* (We blame Rome's Church for not upholding this custom, or us not totally following their example and rite. . . I am not saying this to criticize others but to justify our own ministration). Here, we have to notice some joy of independence being expressed by Ambrose Bishop of Milan from Rome's Pope. Saint Ambrose expressed a similar sense of joy in letter no. 86, telling Pope Syricius the following: You gave to Priscus, who is a friend of mine, and who is of the same age like me, a letter for me. And I, when he came back, I gave him the letter I owed you due to my service and my love for you (Saint Ambrose of Milan 1994d).

Based on the context provided above, regarding the authenticity of the commentary on Ambrose's Creed, only a few objections were made by patrologists and linguists since this commentary has been perceived as an unedited work by some researchers.

In 1784, *Explanatio symboli* was included among the works belonging to Maxim of Turin for the first time, in the edition created by Bruno Bruni. It can be found in the Latin Patrology vol. 57, columns 853–858, and it was printed after a manuscript belonging to Lambach, which has been preserved until the present day. The complete text was also printed in 1813, 1879, and 1952, and it was analyzed by Germain Morin and by the monk Richard Hung Connolly in various studies and articles (Botte 1961).

3. Ambrosian Problem Formulation

We are certain that the *Explanatio symboli* does not belong to the sermons' corpus uttered by Saint Ambrose, as is the case for *De sacramentis*. Rather, it is a stenography of a fragment from *Traditio Symboli*. . . a catechesis fragment (Botte 1961). It had a well-defined place in the baptismal rite, especially in the baptism of children from the end of the Century IV, which was also a known and common practice in the Occidental churches.

From the beginning, Saint Ambrose specified the signification of the term *symbol*; as such, we must provide an explanation of the term. *Symbol* is a Greek word meaning bringing together (two realities, a. n.). More specifically, the merchants speak about bringing together when they decide to pool their money, and the sum gathered thus is perceived as whole and inviolable, so that no one dares to commit fraud regarding the initial agreement or the unfolding of the contract. The merchants also use this strategy to remove any crook who would commit fraud (Saint Ambrose of Milan 1961b, p. 47).

The catechumens were invited to repeat, through oral exercises, the content of the *Creed*. We must specify here that during Saint Ambrose's time, the institution of the catechumenate was seen as proof of the maturity and maternity of the Church facing Arianism's heresy, and it was also an essential function of the ecclesiastic community (Borras 2006, p. 6). This practice was observed quite frequently because of the illiteracy of the masses, who, immediately after the persecutions had come to an end, expressed a desire to belong to the Christian faith. The dogmatic center of the fragment of the Creed focused on Trinitarian (Saint Basile the Great 1988, p. 366) and Christological dogma, which led to a common utterance in the form of an invitation to this demarch that visibly highlighted the love between believers and the sincere confession of the unanimous faith. If we do not confess in a sole thought, together, our faith in Him will not be strengthened by the conviction and

by the warmth that we communicate reciprocally. Without others' love for me, and without my love for them, both of our faiths will weaken. That is why God sees in the love between us the premise of our strong faith in Him. Of course, the inverse is also true: out of our strong faith in Him, as commonly affirmed by us, the love between us will increase so that we all benefit from this. And God wants this unity to be accomplished between us, and between us and Him (Jn. 17: 11). And in this manner, we advance into the Kingdom of the Holy trinity, Who is love (Stăniloae 1986, pp. 243–244).

Saint Ambrose insists on the second recitation of the Symbol that helps provide an immediate, more detailed explanation, article by article. There follows a third recitation of the Symbol, in which the articles of the Creed are grouped and synthesized in a few words. This phasing leads the catechumen from uttering the Creed by mouth to living with their hearts, according to the teachings of faith synthesized by the Symbol. In particular, the expressed dogma becomes a way of life when one receives the Holy Mysteries in the Church of Christ, and the uninitiated are forbidden from accessing the writing and the communication of the synthesized content of faith.

While in Milan, the catechumens received the approval to utter the *Creed* (usually on Holy Saturday), together with the officiation of the Baptism, in Jerusalem, the catechumen they received permission to learn the *Creed* five weeks later (from Lent, a. n.). It was explained to them, and on the morning of Palm Sunday, the bishop (who was staying in the *syntronos* from *Martyrio*) checked that the Creed had been learnt by all candidates who came accompanied by their godfathers (Dorneanu 2022, pp. 726–727). For modern believers, in addition to the gifts offered during the first two Sundays from Lent, and the numerous hymnographic compositions on diverse theological–dogmatic themes, the old practice of the learning, uttering, and interpretation of the *Symbol* of Faith can be substituted by the reiteration or the exegeses of the *Creed* or by reading the Orthodox Catechism. The Fathers' explanations of the articles of faith would benefit the conscious assumption of their own faith, provide a space for which were once made during the process of baptism, and favor the periodical, deliberate renewal of the confession which any Christian owes (Dorneanu 2022, p. 764).

The need the symbol was felt by Saint Ambrose because of the Arianism and Sabellian mix which was undermining the Milanese community, and that why the allusions to those disputes were not missed during his explanations. Additionally, candidates for receiving the Mystery of the Baptism were adults who needed to confess with their heart and not only with their mouth, though the Pauline message supposed that both sorts of confession occurred in simultaneity and in complementarity: *If you confess with your **mouth** that Jesus is the Lord and if you believe in your **heart** that God resurrected Him from death, you will be saved* (Rom. 10: 9).

Intra te ipsum. Ambrose insists upon the peace and not upon uttering *in forte*, but on repeating the *Creed* twice *intra te*. This is the oral style. Peacefully uttering it, twice, requires that one also struggle with the diverse infirmities of the body and the soul. I want you to be aware of this: the *Symbol* must not be written down. You have to give it back, but let nobody write down. Why is that? We have received it in such a manner that it does not need to be written down. What should I do? Memorize it. But how can we preserve it without writing it down? We can memorize it without writing it down. Why? Here (is the explanation): What you write down, being sure that you will read it again, you will not reread daily for meditative purposes. On the contrary, that which you have not written down, you will repeat daily for fear of forgetting it. And that is of a great help. If you experience numbness of your soul and of your body, if there occurs to you the temptation from the enemy who never dies, if you feel trembles in your body, or if you have some sort of stomach ailment, you will retransmit (orally) the Symbol and you will be healed. Utter it within

yourself; above all within yourself. Why? Because this will ensure that you do not become accustomed to uttering it with a loud voice where other believers are too, and that you will also utter it among catechumens and heretics (Saint Ambrose of Milan 1961b, pp. 57–58).

The insistence of Saint Ambrose upon this complementary aspect indicates that it is not merely about a refuge gate, especially because back then, some people converted to Christianity to be able to occupy public offices. They had a short-term interest and a worldly perspective of the faith, but being a Christian is not a fiction but a way of living, and its dogma must be felt empirically. As such, Saint Ambrose insisted upon some words as *invisibilem* (unseen, Latin) and *inpassibilem* (unfelt, Latin). And then the heresies appeared. The Apostle said, *This is because there must be heresies among you in order for the experienced ones to be proven* (1 Cor. 11: 19). What did he want to say? How much simplicity could be expressed? How pure was the message? When the Patrissians, the Catholics from this country appeared, they estimated, in turn, that it was necessary to add *invisible* and *impassible*, as if the Son of God was to be visible and passible. If he was seen in the body, that body was seen and not the Godhead; that body suffered, and not the Godhead. In addition, listen to what He said: *My God, My God, take heed at Me, why have You forsaken Me?* (Ps. 21: 1). Our Lord said this during His sufferings. He spoke, thus, like one in a body, and the body was speaking towards Godhead: why have you forsaken Me? Let us suppose that our ancestors had been physicians and they wanted to banish an illness by using medicine. Well, (if we were healthy) one would not need medicines; during that time there was, among some heretics, a grave illness of the soul; medicine was needed at that time, it is not needed any more. Why is this? This faith has been regarded as intact against Sabellians. The Sabellians were banished, especially those from the Occidental areas. Out of this medicine, the Arians drew upon themselves some sort of calumny so that—once we retained the *Symbol* of the Roman Church—they specified that the Almighty Father is unseen and dispassionate, and they said, See, so is the *Symbol* too, right, because it tells us that the Son is seen and suffering. What does this mean to say? Where faith is united, the teachings of the apostles are sufficient, and we do not search for guarantees, not even from bishops. Why? This is because of the tares being mixed with the wheat (Saint Ambrose of Milan 1961b, pp. 49–50). This attitude of the Milanese bishop was because the explanation of the *Symbol* was aimed at the Semi-Arianism of Bishop Auxentius (Saint Ambrose of Milan 1994c, p. 125), his predecessor, to whom he sent a rebuking letter insisting on the fact that only the Baptism in the name of the Holy Trinity provides salvation. This context allows us to understand that the speaking bishop suppressed these words to turn back to the pure and simple Roman *Symbol* (Botte 1961, p. 23).

4. *Explanatio symboli* as Catechetical Lesson and as Christian Pedagogy

A lesson of catechism and of Christian pedagogy, *Explanatio symboli* does not wish to be a theological dissertation that aims to introduce its content within catechumens' heart. However, as part of the actual missionary activity of the Church it can remain an example of the need for catechesis in the ecclesial environment, one that was repeated in a tripartite manner by the Milanese bishop. Of course, one must notice that the one teaching the word of the truth, within the Church, is the bishop. In the past, the bishop only preached. To date, the priests have been preaching the faith within Church by/with delegation from the hierarch. Coming together, the Holy Apostles summarized the faith, allowing us to understand what faith we are following. The confession of faith must be short so that we may always look at it with memory and remembrance. It is a known fact, especially in the Oriental regions, (it has been added) that the messages conveyed by people in ancient times have been corrupted—by fraud in the case of the heretics and by zeal among the Catholics. In attempting to fraudulently gain access to the religion, some converts embellished upon

the original message, while others, in their desire to eliminate such fraudulence, crossed, mercifully and imprudently, beyond the limits imposed in the past (Saint Ambrose of Milan 1961b, p. 47). Along with *De sacramentis* and *De mysteriis*, *Explanatio symboli* clearly describes the initiatory rites in the City of Milan at the end of Century IV, and in this regard, the three works perfectly compliment one another. The date of writing of the *Explanatio symboli* is uncertain. Saint Ambrose became bishop in the year 373 and he died in the year 397. If the work *De mysteriis* was written sometime between 387 and 391, *De sacramentis* and the associated sermons came later, meaning that *Explanatio symboli* was likely written sometime between 380 and 390 (Botte 1961, p. 25).

From the beginning, *Explanatio* refers, on one hand, to the uncleanness of the human ontology, and on the other hand to the concomitant sanctification of the body and of the soul. A true catechist, Saint Ambrose started in the early morning with the dogmatic pedagogy of the *Creed*, likely on Easter morning. This conclusion is based on letter no. 20 sent to his sister, Marcellina, in which he specified the following: After reading and explaining the Gospel and after the exit of the catechumens, at the request of some people, I explained the Symbol of Faith in baptisteries. . . It was the day on which our Lord surrendered Himself for us, and on this day, no confessions are received within the church (Saint Ambrose of Milan 1994b, pp. 111, 113).

The *Symbol* of Faith, in the Nicaean form, was strictly tied to the rule of the Mystery of the Holy Baptism, and that is why it will be useful to describe some of the aspects of the Milanese initiatory rite. The rule started one day before Holy Easter, and the first part was called *apertio* (the bringing forwards, in Latin). At that moment, the catechumens stood in front of the baptistery. The bishop touched their ears and their noses, uttering the word *Effata!* (open!), a word taken from the Gospel according to Mark (7: 34) and uttered by the Savior Christ when healing the deaf and mute man. It was a simple touch without using sanctified oil. After the *apertio* (Saint Ambrose of Milan 1994a, pp. 9–10), the catechumens entered the baptistery for the rejection, which was preceded by an anointing with oil performed by a priest or, in some cases, by a deacon. This rule is absent from the treatise *De mysteriis*, which mentions the *apertio* but which refers directly to rejections. The anointing of the whole body, as in the Eastern tradition, assumes that the neophyte is now in the posture of a fighter in the arena of their sins, which will no longer be able to stick to them. This was a real and mandatory custom employed by gladiators when entering arenas of antique circuses. This process was followed rejections, preceded by the following question: Do you reject satan and his work/deeds? In the Milanese variant, there were two affirmations to repeat, rather than three: You have entered the sanctuary of birth anew; repeat that what you have asked; remember that what you have answered. You have rejected Satan and all his deeds, the world and the debauchery and its delectations. Your answer will be preserved not in the pit of the dead but in the book of the living (Saint Ambrose of Milan 1994a, p. 10).

The rejections were performed, as in the Eastern rite, with the face turned towards the West, and then the penitent was turned with their face towards the East without blowing/spitting upon the devil. They then received the following instruction: Mark yourself with the sign of the cross! Once this was done, the *Symbol* was uttered: This *Symbol* very clearly expressed the Godhead of the eternal trinity: there is only the work of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost—in other words: of the venerated/steadfast Trinity. Let your faith uphold an equal belief in the Father, in the Son, and in the Holy Ghost. This is because where there is no difference in glory, there must be no difference in faith. In addition, I have always warned you that only our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, took this body, with a human rationale and perfect soul, and he embodied Himself. He has made Himself as a man truly with this body, but He has the unique privilege of His birth.

This is because He was born not through a human seed, but he was conceived, they say, through the Holy Ghost, by the Virgin Mary. You must recognize here the privilege of the divine Creator: He has made Himself man, truly, to take within His body our infirmities, but He came with the privilege of His eternal glory (Saint Ambrose of Milan 1961b, p. 49). There followed the sanctification in the name of the Holy Trinity.

During the life of Saint Ambrose, it was also customary to wash the feet of the person who had been baptized after the officiation of the Holy Mystery (Saint Ambrose of Milan 1994a, pp. 16–17). Some theologians have opined that the washing of the feet would be analogous to baptism. Father Ene Braniște believes that through the inherited sins (Latin: *haereditaria peccata*), Saint Ambrose did not understand the ancestral sin but its consequences, namely, the passions and the tendency towards sin (the Latin word for that is *concupiscentia*). This can be more clearly seen in the explanation Saint Ambrose gave for Psalm 48: 5, which is about the lawlessness of my heel (Latin: *iniquitas calcanei mei*), which he expressed in connection with the curse of Adam (Gen. 3: 15) and to the washing of Peter's feet by the Savior at the Last Supper (see *In Psalmum XLVIII, Ennaratio* 8) (Braniște 1994, p. 17). Monsignor Francesco Braschi (Braschi 2007, p. 699) expressed the same opinion in his recent research on the psalms interpreted by Saint Ambrose of Milan.

The washing of the feet was immediately followed by a confession of faith. The neophyte descended into baptism accompanied by bishop, by priest, and by deacons. Here, he was asked three questions: *Credis in Deum Patrem omnipotentem? Credis in Dominum nostrum Iesum Christum et in crucem Eius? Credis in Spiritum Sanctum?* (Saint Ambrose of Milan 1961a, pp. 84 and 86; Pelikan 2010, p. 55; Anderson 1997). (Do you believe in the Almighty God the Father? Do you believe in our Lord Jesus Christ and in His Cross? Do you believe in the Holy Ghost?). The neophyte answered, *Credo* (I believe). It is important to specify here that after each answer, the neophyte was sunk into the baptism's water, and that this totally validates the officiated mystery. Also, by mentioning the Holy Cross, they ensured a small doxology of the All-Holy Trinity was confessed and worshiped. This was followed by the anointing with the Holy and Great Chrism, along with a recitation of the following words: *Deus Pater omnipotens qui te regeneravit ex aqua et Spiritu Sancto concessitque tibi peccata tua ipse te unguet in vitam aeternam* (God the Almighty Father, He Who has reborn you out of water and out of Holy Ghost and Who has forgiven your sins, He is anointing you towards the eternal life) (Saint Ambrose of Milan 1961a, p. 88).

5. Praerogativa Fidei Trinitatis

The tri-hypostatic divinity was historically proven as such, and that proof consisted of a shininess, which we would not call movement, of supra-existential and supra-imaginary proportions. We could call *Hagitriasis* the state of the divinity from before hypostatization, and *Hagitriphany* the moment itself of the hypostatization, though between these two there was no distance, because in the content of the Divinity, in the Being of the Divinity, there was no sense of time but only a continuous Present. It is very difficult for us, the people, to think of these acts outside our mental categories of time, space, and cause, etc., as they actually took place. By explaining the *Symbol* of Faith, Saint Ambrose of Milan made this distinction between God's movement *ad intra*, as a mystery of His intrinsic life, and *oikonomia*, or His involvement by His godlike will on the world's soteriological plan. The Milanese Arians, by denying the Godhead of Jesus Christ, actually contested both the Triadology and the soteriology. I believe (in the Almighty God the Father, and into Jesus Christ His Son), unique, our Lord. Say thus: His unique Son. Not the unique Lord. There is no but one God and one Lord. But in order for us not to perpetrate calumny by claiming that the Son is one person (together with the Father, we say): and into Jesus Christ, His unique Son, our Lord. This is because I am talking about the Godhead of the Father and of

the Sohn, and so we are reaching through Embodiment to this affirmation: Who was born (from the Holy Ghost, out of Virgin Mary); Who during the time of Pontius Pilate suffered, died) and He was buried.

You also know of His suffering and His burial. On the third day He resurrected from dead. You also know of His resurrection. He ascended (to heavens), He sits on the right hand of the Father. You can see that the body could not take anything from divinity. More than that, the Embodiment supposed that Christ had achieved a great triumph. For what reason, verily, was He risen from dead, and then placed on the right hand of the Father? He surrendered to the Father his fruit of good pleasure. You know two things: He was resurrected from the dead and He sits on the right hand of the Father. The body could not do anything bad to the glory of the Godhead. You know two things: either our Lord Jesus Christ sits on the right hand (of the Father) and He has been resurrected from the dead according to the privilege of His divinity and of His substance which His birth belongs to; or He has claimed for Himself the privilege of His victory, as an eternal victor who has achieved a beautiful kingdom of God the Father. He sits on the right hand of the Father (where He will come from to judge the living) and the dead. Listen, people! You must believe willingly. Faith will spring out of mercy. From him who loves, nothing will be taken away. To the friend who loves his friend, nothing will be taken away from. From him who loves the Lord with the whole of his thought, nothing must be taken away. I tell you this for the following reason: He stays (on the right hand of the Father). He who loves also has reasons to fear: from where He will come to judge the living and the dead. He is The One Who will be our Judge. Be careful not to take anything away from Him Whom you have as right-Judge. Why is this mystery? Is there only One Judge of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost? Is there only one will? Is there only one greatness? Why do they tell you that the Son will Judge if not in order for you to understand that one must take nothing away from the Son? See, therefore, if one believes in the Father, one must have equal belief in the Son. And in the third place? Into the Holy Ghost too. All the mysteries which you are going to receive, you are going to receive them into this Trinity. Let nobody deceive you. You see that there is a sole work, a sole sanctifying action, a sole majesty of the venerable Trinity ([Saint Ambrose of Milan 1961b](#), pp. 51–52).

This was followed by the washing of the feet of the freshly baptized person, which took place while reading the text from John, chapter 13, a rule that has been preserved until the modern day and is performed on the Holy Friday, as a baptismal–paschal reminiscence. After that, the person was clothed in white vestments and this was followed by the invocation of the gift of the Holy Ghost by the servants *spiritale signaculum* (the spiritual seal) ([Saint Ambrose of Milan 1961a](#)). There is not written evidence of whether an anointing was performed or not. From then on, the baptized person belonged to the Church's community, and he participated in the Holy Liturgy and he was imparted. However, he was also obliged to attend the post-baptismal/paschal catechesis uttered daily, which addressed themes from the Old Testament and the archetypes of the patriarchs Noah, Jacob, and Joseph. The confession of the *Creed* was also included; this was a confession that was forbidden for them to hear before Baptism ([Saint Ambrose of Milan 1961a](#)), and before their commitment to a moral life and the impropriation of the scriptural content present in all the sermons of Saint Ambrose. This proves that the Baptism was only a birth anew and not a form of finality in itself towards eternal life. The richness of the teaching, by explaining the rites and the holy texts, must be lowered, and Trinitary should be confessed on the heart's level and in the framework of an ecclesial life, along with the passing from *naturalia*, to *moralia*, and up to *mystica*. By dedicating one's life to Christ, and confessing one's faith empirically, the newly baptized one is likened to an athlete who is permanently facing daily challenges and temptations, and who has descended into the Baptism's water overshadowed by the

Holy Ghost, as in the regenerative primordial waters (Gen. 1: 2), and then committed by Christ through His descent into the River Jordan's waters, along with the revelation of the Holy Trinity. When the bishop evokes the Father, he calls the coming of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. When he uses the actual words of Christ, that really is the work of the Holy Trinity. But this presence previously manifested through a sign (Cross) which is no longer perceived as a part of the faith. Still, it is *praerogativa fidei* (Lat.: the proof of the faith) (Botte 1961, p. 35).

After the baptismal catechesis came the eucharistic catechesis, which indicated that the mystery of Melchisedec and the manna from Sinai Desert are the unveilings of the Holy Trinity of the Impartation. The main source of inspiration for Saint Ambrose was constituted by the *Mystagogical Catecheses* belonging to Saint Cyril of Jerusalem; we think that a comparison between the two hierarchs, from this point of view, would be interesting, and should start with their common source: Origen. One can also note that along with Origen, Philon of Alexandria constituted an important source for Ambrosian catechesis. We must not search this catechesis (or Ambrose) for a profoundly original work. The catechetical work is, before all, a confession of a great Christian tradition starting with Christ and the Apostles and continuing within the Church (Botte 1961, p. 40).

6. Conclusions

The *Symbol of Faith*, recognized as the synthesis of the Apostolic faith, remains—with its scriptural and patristic foundation—the clearest proof within the Church that the connection between doctrine and ecclesial life is normative and indestructible.

Traditio symboli is the result of a *tradition Evangeliorum*. This can be noticed in the work of Saint Ambrose of Milan: *Explanatio symboli*.

As a synthesis of the apostolic confession of faith, the *Explanatio Symboli* constitutes the first doctrinal template for the Western space of the 4th century. Through the Ambrosian model of presentation in an authentic catechetical style, the *Symbol of Faith*, which is authentically confessed in the Church to this day, can lead a person towards an authentic spirituality in which Christ, as true God and true man, is at the center of their concerns.

Contemporary society needs such spirituality—a life in Christ confessed with a concrete way of behavior, a model of forgiveness, peace, and a willingness to establish dialogue with other faiths throughout the world.

Focusing on exploring catechetical pedagogy with the greatest possible accuracy, this work considers three aspects: exegetic, historic, and spiritual in the context of Arianism's unrest in the Milanese environment. It describes, first, the *regula fidei* or the dogmatic tradition expressed in the liturgical context of churchly life, debuting through the Holy Baptism. Along the same lines as the Apostolic Fathers, Saint Ambrose, through *Explanatio Symboli* resonates with their teachings: He who turn the words of the Lord towards his lusts and he says that there is no resurrection, nor judgment, that one is the first born of Satan. That's why, by forsaking the vanity of the many and the false teachings, let's turn ourselves back to the word taught us from the beginning (Saint Polycarp of Smirna 1979, p. 211).

The Creed remains the azimuth of the Church, a confession of faith fixed as normative text. It is a necessity for public and oral confession, the only which gives a true sense of the Church, and sealing it remains a doctrinal and missionary imperative that should continue throughout the centuries.

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