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CYPRIAN.

*Fourth and Last Article.*

THE year 252 brought with it new trials for the Christian Church. There would seem to be a mysterious sympathy between the moral and physical worlds, by which every great catastrophe or crisis in the first is found to be marked more or less distinctly by corresponding tokens and signs in the second. When the foundations of society are about to give way, men's hearts are made often to faint and fear by strange signs of wrath in the course of nature. So it was before the destruction of Jerusalem; and something of the same sort we meet with in the last period of the old Pagan empire of Rome. The decline of the state, the breaking up of the ancient order of life, seemed to draw along with it calamity and disaster in all conceivable forms. The universal course of the world was so ordered, as to proclaim continually its own vanity and misery. On this subject we may learn much from Augustine. Long before his time however, these signs of wrath had begun to show themselves in the economy of God's providence, filling whole lands with ap-

## THE ANTI-CREED HERESY.

WE have had ample opportunity already to expose the opposition, in which much of our Christianity at this time stands to the true sense and spirit of the Apostles' Creed.

Unitarianism rejects it as a matter of course. So also the whole Baptist body. But the case is not materially better with Puritanism in general. The Puritan Recorder has boldly avowed the fact that the Creed and Puritanism have not a kindred spirit, that in truth they mutually exclude each other, and cannot stand together, except as the first is taken in a wholly *non-natural* sense, and made to mean just the contrary of what it was taken to mean in the ancient church. We have found the N. Y. Observer denouncing also the principle and theory of this ancient faith, in similar radical style, as the beginning of an apostacy which is supposed to have turned the whole church into a synagogue of Satan.

In the last number of the Princeton Repertory, the Rev. Dr. Proudfit, of New Brunswick, has a long and labored article on the Apostles' Creed, which we are sorry to say falls into substantially the same heretical pravity. Our limits here will not allow us to notice it at much length. Nor is that necessary. Enough, that we bring into view simply its leading points, drawing them forth from the mass of irrelevant learning in which they are buried and hid. The article needs no other exposure.

Dr. Proudfit tries hard in the first place to make something dreadful, out of the light in which the Creed is presented by our articles in the first volume of the Mercersburg Review. He will have it, that we make the intuitional consciousness of the Church the fountain of a Divine revelation in some way, independently of the word of God which is contained in the Bible; and with his characteristic dishonesty goes so far even as to insinuate that we follow Strauss as a master, because we had said somewhere that his work shows the necessity of looking for the ground of Christianity in something deeper than the mere outward text of the sacred books, which give us an account of what it was in the beginning. Had we said that Gibbon's abuse of Church History shows the necessity of looking beyond its external facts and persons to the Divine life which was in them, in the style for instance of Neander, there would have been precisely the same room for charging us with taking lessons of an infidel. It is wonderful however how much of this

nasty sort of art and trick our Brunswick Professor has. It seems to be part of his nature.

The view we have taken of the Creed is simple enough. We have granted, that it was not from the start, as to letter and form, just what we find it to be in the fourth century. In spirit and substance however it was always the same, any modifications it experienced being nothing more in fact than the bringing out of the sense which had been in it from the beginning. In this view it dates from the time of the Apostles. To say that it was drawn from the New Testament Scriptures is simply absurd; because these were not in existence when the faith of the Church started, and came not into their present canonical form for at least a hundred years after. During all this time however the Church had a rule of faith, a fixed and settled norm of doctrine, everywhere acknowledged and received. This had its seat of course in the life of the Church itself, in the fact of what Christianity was to the consciousness of her actual faith; but we have never dreamed certainly of making it for this reason the product of this subjective consciousness as such. It had its origin and ground in the objective revelation of Christianity itself, as an outward supernatural fact. This was primarily Christ himself, as in Peter's great confession. Afterwards we have it in full outline in the preaching of the Apostles; from which it passed into the consciousness of the Church; where under the promised guidance of the Spirit it was kept afterwards to its true and proper form, as already mentioned. The Church exercised no other intuition in the case, than that of apprehending and holding fast in such way, under this promised guidance, the real objective supernatural mystery of godliness which had thus been committed to her by the living Christ and his living Apostles in the beginning, and long before the authoritative publication of the N. T. Scriptures, as a more ample record of the same glorious revelation, under her auspices and care; a work for which, as well as for her most faithful guardianship of these "oracles of God," through the long night of the dark ages, (when she was herself so completely sold as some tell us to the powers of hell,) we owe her a debt of filial gratitude and love greater than can be well expressed.

Let Dr. Proudfit and all others whom it may concern, make themselves easy on this point. We have no sympathy with the intuitionism of Schleiermacher or Morell. We hold Christianity to be a strictly objective supernatural revelation, a mystery in this view wholly above nature both logical and material, which can be apprehended only through faith and by a new

understanding given to us for the purpose by the Son of God alone.

But let *our* view of the Creed now pass. What we have to do with here is the view taken of it by Dr. Proudfit. His object in trying to set aside our representation, is to make room for another conception which may strip the symbol of its binding authority altogether. It came not in full form as we have it now from the Apostles; it abounded at first in variations; it underwent some additions; *therefore* it is of no Apostolical necessity for faith. So Puritanism is wont to argue. We undertook to show, that these premises rightly understood led to no such conclusion; because the variations and additions were never such as to change at all the proper unity and sameness of the Creed, in its essential constitution. The *regula fidei* on which the Church stood from the first, was just the substance of this glorious confession, handed forward from age to age in the life of faith. The Creed is the mirror of this faith as it had been received from the Apostles; and no other form of words can be said to represent truly and rightly the original fact of the Christian revelation. Against this Dr. Proudfit, we say, tries to fight as he best can. He wishes to have it thought, that the Creed had no fixed character in the beginning; that it was formed loosely at first from the Scriptures according to the private judgment of separate churches; that its variations prove the churches to have been much in the same state with our modern Independent ecclesiastical organizations, each of which claims the right of making its own creed in its own way; and that it is injurious to the Bible accordingly to attribute to it any binding authority whatever in determining the true sense of Christianity. If this be not what the article means, we know not how to find in it any meaning whatever.

Here then we have the heresy of the Puritan Recorder openly paraded in the pages of the Princeton Repertory, by a learned Professor of the Reformed Dutch Church! For let it be observed, the question is not at last whether our theory of the rise of the Creed is to be considered correct or not; but whether the Creed, *however it may have risen*, is to be regarded as still truly and really the norm, as far as it goes, the fixed doctrinal matrix and mould of the Christian faith for all ages. It was so regarded, we know, in all ages before the Reformation. It was so regarded also by the first Protestant Churches. Dr. Proudfit makes a show indeed of proving the contrary, by quoting passages from their Confessions that make the Bible to be the rule of faith against all human traditions. But this is pitiful quib-

bling. They professed notwithstanding to hold fast to the Creed as a true exposition of the Christian faith. They never dreamed of sundering the Bible from the mind of the Church as it had stood in previous ages in every form and shape, and turning it over to the judgment of any and all persons for such interpretation as might happen to seem fit. They owned the necessity of a confessional *norm* for the right use of the Bible; and the necessary beginning of this, the archetypal and primitive symbol of Christianity, they acknowledged to be the Apostles' Creed. However it might have come to its present settled form, they held it to be a true expression of what the Christian faith was as received by the Church in the first ages from the Apostles, from which as a rule of belief the same Church in later times had no right to depart. But this is just what the article before us is not willing to admit; for the admission would be at once fatal to its whole argument.

True, the article affects to speak respectfully of the Creed. Ursinus, Vossius, Heidegger, we are told p. 614, enumerate as catholic or universal the Apostolic, Nicene, and Athanasian creeds; and among these "the shortest, simplest, most comprehensive, and most strictly scriptural is without doubt the Apostolic." But then the drift of the whole discussion notwithstanding is to make this acknowledgment of no force. There is no conflict among these catholic creeds. They are strictly the *one* faith of the primitive church; and one must be interpreted by the rest to be of any real force. This fact however Dr. P. seeks to hide. His art is to throw all as much as possible into uncertainty and confusion. Then the Creed is for him a mere bundle of received maxims, brought together in a simply outward way; than which no conception can be more false or more contrary to sound faith. It is a most perfect unit; an organism, in which every part is true only as it grows forth from the whole. It is a mirror reflecting thus at every point the original life of the universal church. This Dr. P. has no power to see; and so he will not allow it to be of true symbolical authority, in its own whole and only true original sense, for the interpretation of the Bible. He shows throughout a strong dislike to this sense, especially as it comes to view in the article of the church as the organ and medium of salvation; and openly repudiates as contrary to the Scriptures the whole sacramental and mystical side of Christianity, without which the Creed for the first Christians would have had no meaning whatever.

But what need is there of analysis to make out the point, that Dr. Proudfit rejects the authority of the Apostles' Creed, as the

fundamental rule and norm of the Christian faith? In no other view, can his article be taken to have any sense. Is not this just what he finds fault with in the Mercersburg Review, that it seeks to bind the interpretation of the Bible by the Apostles' Creed? Either he honestly holds the Creed, as we have it and however it came, for such a symbol, or he does not. If he does so hold it, what ground of quarrel can he have with us for allowing to it the same authority? If not, what farther proof is wanted to fix upon him, in common with Unitarians and Baptists, the stigma of the Anti-Creed heresy?

To sustain himself in his desperate position, he finds it necessary in the next place to contend that the faith of the first ages was based upon the independent use of the Bible, without any other standing rule of faith, in the pretended style of the modern sect system; and he has the hardihood to think of forcing this outrageous misrepresentation, not only upon the times of Irenaeus and Tertullian, but even upon the Nicene period itself!

Is it asked now, by what *hocus-pocus* this feat of historical legerdemain is performed? We answer, it is done in the simplest and most *characteristic* way imaginable. The whole art and mystery of the thing consists in shifting the point in debate, so as to make it turn on the question only whether the early church regarded and used the Holy Scriptures as of Divine authority in matters of religion; about which, so far as we know, there never has been any sort of doubt. Will it be believed, that so learned a man as the Rev. Dr. Proudfit of New Brunswick lays himself out systematically to prove, by quotation upon quotation, first that Irenaeus, Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Origen, &c., and then that Athanasius, Chrysostom, Basil, the Gregories, &c., of a later day, all held and taught the inspiration and binding authority of the Scriptures in the Christian Church; and that this should then be gravely taken by him as proof, that they owned and acknowledged no guiding rule, no governing norm, for determining *the true sense of these Scriptures*, but left it to private judgment to settle their sense as it best could on the outside of the Church?

The thing is absolutely ridiculous. Who does not know that the Fathers all held the Bible in the highest veneration? The Catholic Church has always honored it as of Divine authority. We owe the sacred deposit altogether to her care. She formed the canon of the New Testament, deciding what it should contain and what it should not contain, and affixing to it the stamp of inspiration. And what she produced in such form, she has most religiously and faithfully preserved through all ages.

Without her *imprimatur* and seal now, all would be thrown into loose uncertainty and doubt. There can be no firm faith in the inspiration of the Scriptures, where there is no faith in the mystery of the Church. So Augustine teaches;<sup>1</sup> and so too we are taught by the Creed. And yet here we have the champion of Puritanism holding up the faith of the early fathers in the inspiration of the Scriptures, as in and of itself a conclusive argument that they had no sense of any Divine authority in the Catholic Church. Could nonsense well be more egregious!

Only think of Tertullian's tract on *Prescription* being quoted, to prove just the opposite of the whole argument in which it deals; that is, to make it appear that the Bible is the rule of faith, aside from the tradition of the Church, in the hands of the faithful and of all sorts of heretics alike! What then *was* his famous argument against heretics? Who does not know, that his whole object is to reduce the determination of what is Christianity, and so of course the interpretation also of the Bible, to a standard of faith already actually at hand in the church, which was supposed as such to have come down from the time of the Apostles?<sup>2</sup>

The use made of Irenaeus is equally absurd. For the object he aims at, Dr. Proudfit's quotations absolutely stultify themselves. For instance: "We must betake ourselves to the Church," writes this Father, "and be brought up in her bosom, *and nourished by the Scriptures of the Lord.*" What does this mean, but that the right use of the Bible is confined to the Church; which he compares immediately after with a paradise in the world, within which the Scriptures as trees bear fruit, for such only of course as are *there* and not on the outside—the very same thought that we find so familiar afterwards to Cyprian? Yet this passage Dr. P. quotes, italicising the last clause, to prove these trees of salvation *not* confined for their right use to

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<sup>1</sup> Witness his memorable word: "Ego vero evangelio non crederem, nisi me Catholicae ecclesiae commoveret auctoritas."

<sup>2</sup> In dealing with heretics, he tells us *De Praesc.* c. 18, the right order of controversy requires that we should settle first: "Quibus competat fides ipsa? Cujus sint scripturae? A quo, et per quos, et quando, et quibus sit tradita disciplina qua fiunt Christiani?" And then he adds: "Ubi enim apparuerit esse veritatem et disciplinae et fidei christianae, *illic erit verus scripturarum et expositionum et omnium traditionum christianarum.*" This is certainly plain enough. The only true sense of the Bible is that which agrees with the mind of the Church; and where is this norm to be had primarily if not in her established universal creed or scheme of faith?

the garden of the Lord's planting; or to show, in other words, that Irenæus made the Bible the source of Christianity without the Church.

But what shall we say of his attempt to Puritanize the Nicene Period, in the same violent style? Our statement, that the fathers of this time "knew nothing of the view which makes the Bible and private judgment the principle of Christianity or the only rule of faith"—that the order of doctrine for them was the Apostles' Creed," he flatly denies; and anon sallies forth, in true Don Quixote style, to accumulate citations from Athanasius, Hilary, Victorinus, Cyril of Jerusalem, the Gregories, Ephraim the Syrian, Basil, and Chrysostom, page piled upon page, to make good the temerarious contradiction. He does prove indeed triumphantly that these worthies speak in the most exalted terms of the Bible, (as the Catholic Church has always done,) and that they made much account of inward personal religion also, as distinguished from dead outward forms; and so he draws what he conceives to be his invincible ERGO: That they owned no Divine tradition of faith, no fixed creed, in the living Church as such, and knew nothing of Divine sacraments and true priestly functions in the style of the later Catholic system! It would be a pity to disturb the self-complacent serenity of such a notable *non sequitur*, by any show of serious resistance. We leave it alone in its glory.

We have never pretended to quote testimonies from the Nicene Period, for the purpose of proving that it was prevailingly Catholic and not Puritan. Why carry coals to Newcastle or Mauch Chunk? That is a fact too well settled certainly for any honest controversy or debate. We have referred before to Isaac Taylor's *Ancient Christianity*. It is enough now to refer to it again. Much as we dislike the theological animus that reigns in it, its simply historical positions on this point are of

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\* Here he charges us with *misstating* the case we oppose, by joining *private judgment* with the Bible. We beg leave however to retort the charge on himself and his school. To talk of the Bible as a principle or rule, *aside* from all judgment or interpreting sense, is downright childishness. The whole question regards the mind or judgment by which it is to be interpreted. Without some such mind, it never can become a principle or rule of anything. What we maintain is, that it must be read with the mind of the Church, which starts in the Apostles' Creed. Not so, says Dr. P. & Co.; that is to put it under the church; it must be read by some *other* mind; by *our* mind, by the mind of this or that sect; by *every* body's mind to suit himself. And what is this, we ask now, but to make the Bible and *private judgment* the principle and rule of Christianity?



unanswerable force. Let Dr. Proudfit meet them fairly if he can. Till he does so, it is breath spent in vain, to think of making good Puritans out of the fathers of the fourth and fifth centuries. 'They were as far as they well could be from anything of that sort.'

"I firmly believe," says Taylor, "that it were on the whole better for a community to submit itself, without conditions, to the well known Tridentine Popery, than to take up the Christianity of Ambrose, Basil, Gregory Nyssen, Chrysostom, Jerome, and Augustine. Personally, I would rather be a Christian after the fashion of Pascal and Arnold, than after that of Cyprian or Cyril." We confess ourselves to be very much of the same mind.

When Dr. P. is done with Isaac Taylor, he may try his polemical hand, if he see proper, with the masterly work of Richard Rothe, entitled *Die Anfänge der christlichen Kirche*. This leaves little to be done, in the way of learning, for settling the view taken of the *Church* in the second and third centuries. When Dr. P. shall have answered it, we will begin to think

<sup>1</sup> We are glad to find that *Dr. Ludlow*, associated with Dr. P. now in the New Brunswick Institutions, in his late *Inaugural Discourse*, has taken the true view of facts here, directly in the face of his learned colleague. He quotes with approbation Taylor's judgment concerning the Romanizing tendencies of the Early Church back even to the second century, and then adds:

"The candid inquirer after truth will be amazed to find upon what a slender, precarious, visionary foundation the most strenuous endeavors were made in the ancient Church to create for her an all-absorbing, overpowering hierarchy. He will mark with surprise how soon new offices, forms, rites, ceremonies, were introduced. He will learn with no less astonishment that the custom of praying for the dead was universal; a custom of as high antiquity as any part of Christian worship which is not authorized by the inspired writings. Indeed, it is wanting no kind of support except from the holy Scriptures. Not much less may be said of the doctrines of celibacy and virginity, which seemed stealthily to make their way from the very days of the apostles, and were gradually growing into favor, until they received the sanction of the Synods of the Church, a little more than two centuries after the last of the apostles had departed. These doctrines, so pernicious to the morals and piety of the Church, so far from being opposed, were inculcated and lauded by all the Nicene fathers with scarce an exception. To these doctrines must be added the appointment of numerous days of feasting and fasting; rules and regulations in regard to meats and drinks; various appendages to the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper; veneration for relics; the worship of martyrs; pilgrimages to holy places, and the formal establishment of Monachism. And all this within the period of those three centuries from which we are to derive the model of a perfect Church."

that his vain babbling about the Christianity of this early time, is entitled to some little respect.

The case is abundantly clear. The faith of the Early Church is eternally imbedded in the Apostles' Creed. So, and not otherwise, the fact of Christianity was understood and embraced in the first ages. So the Bible was read, and not in any different *private* sense. This was the ground form in which the Christian consciousness, the universal mind of the Church, met and embraced by faith the corresponding substance of the Christian revelation, as it was preached by the Apostles and so passed over into the Sacred Writings. The Church had, it is true, different Creeds. But these were all in their fundamental conception and scheme one and the same; and this outline we have faithfully presented to us in the Apostles' Creed. There is no disagreement at all between it and the Nicene Creed for instance, or that of Athanasius. The proper identity of the symbol is not just in its so many clauses or words, but in its reigning idea rather, its grand *projection* of the primary facts of the "Mystery of Godliness." In this view, it gives us undoubtedly the true *regula fidei* of Primitive Christianity; and has always been regarded accordingly as of *oecumenical* or universal authority; not of course as excluding other symbols more extensive and full, but still in such a way as to require that these should grow forth from it, have their root in it and be a true carrying out of its sense, in order to be of any like oecumenical right and force.<sup>1</sup> The scheme of faith it presents is, for any

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. P. affects to be scandalized at our saying, that "the article of justification by faith itself is turned into a perilous lie," if it be sundered from the scheme of truth exhibited in the ancient creeds. This only shows, however, the weak sense he has of the organic nature and true objective reality of the Christian faith. There is no such thing as getting to the doctrine of justification, or any other doctrine, legitimately and so that it shall be truly a part of the "One Faith" originally delivered to the saints, without beginning with the elementary form of this faith as it lies before us in the Apostles' Creed; for that can be no true fruit of Christian thought and feeling certainly, and so no true sense either of the Bible, which is not produced from the root of all Christian doctrine as it has entered into the very life of the Church from the beginning. Even what may be a sound doctrine in word must become false and dangerous in fact, if it be not apprehended under such felt relation to the unchangeable *incunabula* of Christianity, as they are here presented to our view, but be held as something brought in from a wholly different sphere of thinking. And there is no doubt whatever, that the article of justification by faith, as it is practically carried out by some of our unsacramental sects, which despise the Creed and resolve the Church into a Gnostic fiction, is just in this way converted

honest and tolerably well informed person, sufficiently plain. It is the same that we meet with on every page of the ancient Fathers, and in all the institutions of the early Church. It is constructed throughout on the Catholic, as distinguished from the modern Puritan habit, of mind. Its articles are all mysteries. They set before us an order of things above nature, which is yet taken to be really at hand, as the presence of a new creation in the world, accomplishing its own supernatural ends. The scheme is sacramental, in the very sense which is so distasteful to the Gnostic spiritualism of the present day. This is felt at once in the article of the *Holy Catholic Church*, with its communion of saints and remission of sins. The article may be indeed construed to mean an invisible church simply, where grace works without sacraments. But then it is forced out of its proper historical sense. It had no such meaning for the early ages; and no such meaning falls in fairly with the scheme and scope of the symbol as a whole. The *Church* here spoken of is a real mystery derived through the Holy Ghost from the fact of the Incarnation—the Body by which Christ as Head works in the world—the ark of salvation—an object in this view of faith—just as it comes before us in the writings of Irenaeus, Cyprian, and all the fathers of the fourth and fifth centuries. Through her is the forgiveness of sins accordingly, the communion of saints, the resurrection of the body and life everlasting. The forgiveness of sins thus refers immediately to baptism; as we have it explicitly brought out in the Nicene Creed: “I confess one baptism for the remission of sins.” In all this we are offering no doubtful speculation. We simply state a fact which allows no contradiction. This is the system of Christianity taught in the Apostles’ Creed, and held in the beginning by the whole Church.

But now just this scheme of Christianity Dr. Proudfit, with the whole spiritualistic school to which he belongs, has no mind or heart to accept. Everything like a churchly, priestly, sacramental religion, is for him the abomination of Romanism itself. He can subscribe to the Creed, if he be allowed to do so with vast mental reservation, in a non-natural sense, “foisting into” it a meaning to please himself; but not otherwise. He believes

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into a fearful falsehood, that is doing more mischief on all sides than can easily be told. No theology can be orthodox, no religion safe, no faith more than spiritual fancy we fear, that does not breathe throughout a filial unconstrained and unaffected veneration for the *Symbolum Apostolicum*, in its original and only proper sense.

in no descent to hades, no continuation of the glorified resurrection life of Christ *εἰς παντοτελευ* here below, no supernatural church, no remission of sins, no communion of saints living and dead, *in the sense of this primitive symbol.* This implies a want of harmony with the symbol throughout. For these points are not in their place by accident. They belong to the life of the symbol as a whole. Not to see and feel this, is itself not to own the mystery of the faith it proclaims. It is only in keeping then with such unbelief, that the Puritanism of Dr. Proudfit refuses to see in this ancient oecumenical symbol the necessary matrix of all true Christian theology, and so the only sure primary norm and analogy of faith for the true understanding of the Scriptures. He will have it, that we are bound now by no such rule, but have a perfect right to re-cast the entire fact of Christianity in a different mould, as to *our own judgment* construing the Scriptures may seem best; so that the fact shall be to us something wholly different from what it once *was*, for the mind of the Church just after the time of the Apostles, and yet all be right and safe notwithstanding because we pretend to have found it in the Bible!

This is monstrous certainly. But it is no caricature. It does not, we think, exaggerate Dr. Proudfit's error in the least. If the interpretation of the Bible is to be set free from the authority of the Apostles' Creed, it is vain to talk of its being bound by any other symbolical authority derived from the ancient church. And how then can any modern symbol be allowed to have any such force? What right can the Belgic Confession or the Heidelberg Catechism now have to govern our theology, or be-spectacle our reading of the Holy Scriptures, where the first mirror of the Christian faith itself, the root of all symbols, the underlying foundation of all that is oecumenical in the belief of the Christian world, is thus roughly required to stand back, and make room for the glorious, divinely sacred rights of Private Judgment! To such gross monstrosity, most plainly, the precious theory must necessarily come at the last. In nothing short of this can it possibly pause or rest for a single moment.

What can be more preposterous in these circumstances, than to pretend, as Dr. Proudfit does, to make common cause in any way notwithstanding with the theological life of the ancient fathers? That *their* religion was cast throughout in the mould of the Apostles' Creed, is just as clear as the fact that the sun shines. They magnified the Scriptures undoubtedly, as God's word, and found no terms too strong to set forth their heavenly authority; but they understood the Scriptures at the same time

in the sense only of the great outline of doctrine that is contained in the Creed, and considered it heresy to think of forcing them into any other sense. Whatever may be thought of the way in which the symbol came into its present form, on this point no true scholar can have any sort of doubt. From the fifth century back to the second, all doctrine and faith may easily be seen to run in the channel of this scheme and no other. All the other oecumenical symbols include it, with one unvarying voice. All the oecumenical councils recognize it as the only true platform of Christianity, with one and the same witness, echoing from age to age like the sound of many waters. And are we to be told now, by such a man as Dr. Proudfit, that the fathers even of the fourth and fifth centuries, the bishops who sat in the Councils of Nice, and Constantinople, and Ephesus and Chalcedon, knew nothing of the binding authority of this common settled scheme of faith, but held the naked text of the Bible, without the voice of the living Church, to be a sufficient warrant and rule of doctrine for all men, in the exercise simply of their own judgment, and over against the judgment of the whole Christian world; if need be, back to the earliest times—in the pretended style of the Cumberland Presbyterians, Campbellites, Winebrenerians, Baptists and Puritans generally of the present day?

We say *pretended* style; for there is no such thing in truth as this sort of unsymbolical independence in the interpretation of the Bible; and those who promise liberty in this way, only bring in always a real bondage of spirit in the room of the lawful and just authority they dare to set aside. No man reads the Bible without a theological habit of some sort, (even if it be that of a Voltaire or Paine only,) which goes to determine for him the sense of its words. Every sect has its symbol, its tradition, written or unwritten, generally both, for the most part poor, harsh, hard, and dead—under whose iron yoke, is sung the melancholy song of freedom all the day long. Of all conceivable forms of spiritual vassalage, the most dismal surely is to be estranged from the oecumenical faith, the catholic creed, of God's Church as it has stood from the beginning, and to be adopted into the glorious liberty of some paltry sect, which has manufactured a new edition of Christianity for its own use, fresh from the mint of the Bible, in the most approved Puritan style—and now requires you, on pain of sore heresy if not actual perdition, to read the Bible and do up all your religious thinking in this same fashion precisely and no other. For our part, we think it infinitely more safe, as well as vastly more re-

spectable, to take the sense of the inspired volume, with such men as Irenaeus, Cyprian, Athanasius, Chrysostom, Augustine, and the ancient fathers generally, from the standpoint of the old oecumenical councils and creeds, than to sit for the same purpose at the feet of any modern sect whatever, presuming to set up now any new scheme of faith, *not rooted in the Apostles' Creed*, as a better and surer version of what the Scriptures actually mean.

This however by the way. What we wish to press just now is, that the early fathers themselves at all events, along with the universal church in the first ages, could not possibly have dreamed of any such *creed-less* use of the Scriptures, as Dr. Proudfit has laid himself out to fasten upon their theology, turning all history topsy-turvy to carry his prodigious point. The oecumenical symbols ruled their whole faith. It will not do therefore, to quote their authority against themselves, by pretending to set them in opposition to their own age. There are two horns in this whole dilemma. One is, to contend that the modern unchurchly and unsacramental system is the same that prevailed in the beginning. The other is to give this up as a desperate position, and take refuge in the convenient hypothesis of a mystery of iniquity, working from the start and soon carrying all in its own way; in which case, the Apostles' Creed, together with all the oecumenical creeds and councils, must be included in the diabolical apostacy—since the sacramental system clearly underlies the whole scheme of thinking here brought into view. On one or the other of these horns every man must rest, who undertakes to vindicate Protestantism without the idea of historical development, or growth *through the old Catholic Church* into this later system viewed as a higher stage of Christianity—a view that cuts up by the roots the vulgar anti-popery notion of a total triumph of Satan over the Church, (contrary to Christ's promise,) in the middle ages. Neither of the alternatives affords a comfortable resting place. The horns of the dilemma are both sharp. Hence we see a disposition on the part of modern unchurchliness, to make use as much as possible of both; which, as the first is in truth just the contrary of the second, can be done only by hopping inconstantly backwards and forwards from one to the other, or by trying with wide straddle to gain a ticklish harlequin semblance of footing on both at the same time. This will not hold. We must either be true to the one horn or to the other—make the faith and religious life of the early church to be of force for settling the sense of Christianity, or else carry out in earnest the “mystery of iniquity” hypothesis.

The two views cannot stand together. For there is no room to imagine here a distinction of tendencies in the same system, of any such sort as might suit the purposes of this unsacramental school. The whole theology and piety of these first ages are conditioned by the view of the Church that is presented to us in the old oecumenical creeds. All must go together. If we pretend to be on good terms with the fathers, we must not turn their universal creed into a diabolical lie. Antiquity cannot be both true and false here at the same time.

One of the strangest phenomena in the theological world, it seems to us, is the readiness with which, in this whole controversy so many otherwise sensible people gravely pretend to plead for the credit and authority of the Bible, simply because they are bent on having it construed in their own way rather than in that of the ancient church. As though the whole question were not just this in the end, whether the ancient church took not the sense of the Scriptures more truly, than the version for which it is thus proposed to make room! The unsacramental school to which Dr. Proudfit considers it a merit to belong, continually take it for granted that Christian antiquity, wherever it differs from themselves, can not have the Bible on its side, and that it is the easiest thing in the world to correct it now from the plain sense of the sacred volume *as read by this school*. And yet a child may see, what a perfect nose of wax they themselves make the sacred text to be, in accommodation to their own theory. A few doubtful passages, in the face it may be of the whole drift of God's word, are enough to prove for them this or that particular hobby, which they pretend then to pass off as the same thing with the Divine word itself; while the plainest passages against their general system make no impression upon them whatever. When Dr. Proudfit, in the name of this unchurchly school, makes himself and his system the exponent at once of the true sense of the Scriptures, we beg leave to say to him that the pretension is palpably and monstrously false. It would be easy to quote passage upon passage, the simple plain sense of which his whole standpoint must make it impossible for him to receive. The sixth chapter of John, the terms employed in the institution of the Lord's supper, the foundation of the church on Peter, the Apostolical commission, the giving of the keys, and the numerous passages which directly or indirectly ascribe the power of a new birth to baptism, and make the church the organ and vehicle of salvation, may be noticed as instances. All such passages his theological scheme compels him to misinterpret in the most outrageous style. And yet by this same scheme

he undertakes to rule out of court the mind of the ancient church, as though in varying from such arbitrary rule it must of course vary to the same extent also from the Bible!

Our controversy then with Dr. Proudfit, we repeat, as heretofore with the Puritan Recorder and the Baptists, regards the symbolical authority of the Apostles' Creed. Is it still of binding force for the universal church *in its proper historical sense*, the only sure basis of all other symbols, as it was held to be in the beginning; or has it run itself out into an obsolete fiction? That is the question, which brings fully into view the deep solemnity of this whole subject. What nonsense to prate of orthodoxy and heresy by other standards, where the original mould of the Christian faith is thus rudely dashed to pieces! We take no lesson here from any man, who constructs his whining homily on a formal repudiation of all the old oecumenical symbols, with the venerable Apostles' Creed at their head. We say to him rather, in the withering words of the Saviour: "Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the *beam* that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye, and behold *a beam is in thine own eye?* Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye, and *then shalt thou see clearly* to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye."

J. W. N.

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#### CLOSING NOTICE.

WITH the present number, the *Mercersburg Review* is brought prosperously to the close of its fourth year. As it is felt that its particular mission has been in some sense accomplished, and that it cannot easily be carried forward farther in its past character, it is thought best now to throw the publication into a somewhat different form. It may be expected to appear hereafter, accordingly, in new series, as a *Quarterly*, under some change of title, with more miscellaneous contents, and in more generally popular manner and style. *My own special connection with the work, I wish to have it understood at the same time, is now at an end.* I may write for it occasionally, among other contributors; but I shall be in no way responsible for its editorial management, either directly or indirectly.

Mercersburg, Nov. 10, 1852.

JOHN W. NEVIN.