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ART. VII.—THE APOSTLES' CREED.

To understand properly the religious significance and value of this most ancient Christian symbol, we must take into consideration, first, its *outward history*; secondly, its *constitution*, or *inward form*; and thirdly, its *material structure*, or *organism*. All this may be regarded as forming a proper introduction to the study of its actual contents, the glorious world of truth which it throws open to our contemplation.

I. *Outward History of the Creed.*

The title of the symbol seems, at first sight, to refer its authorship at once to the Apostles; and it has been in fact a very widely prevalent opinion in the Church, resting in long tradition, that it came originally complete in every part, as we now have it, from their hands. In the Romanist communion, it has been looked upon almost universally indeed, as profane to call this in question; and many in the Protestant world, have made it a part of their religion to believe the same thing. The first distinct statement

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of the opinion, we find in Rufinus, a church father of the fourth century; who speaks of it, however, as a common belief, handed down from an earlier time. According to this tradition, he says, the Apostles, before separating to their different fields of service, that they might not fall into any confusion subsequently, met together, and under the guidance of the Holy Ghost, by joint contribution of views, framed and adopted this compend, as a rule of faith, to be everywhere received by the infant churches. Some allusion to such joint composition, was found in the Greek name *symbol* itself, which signifies, primitively, a collation or throwing together of different things; and it is in conformity with the same thought, that we find the tradition elsewhere so far improved, as to refer to each Apostle, separately, a distinct article or clause of the creed, as his particular quota contributed towards its formation.

This whole opinion, however, is one which cannot be maintained with any tolerable show of success. Not only is it destitute of all positive historical foundation, but insuperable difficulties stand in the way of it on every side. No such apostolic creed or rule is mentioned in the New Testament. Some, indeed, have pretended to find it in St. Paul's "analogy or proportion of faith," Rom. xii. 6, the "good deposit" committed to Timothy, 2 Tim. i. 14, the "first principles of the oracles of God," mentioned Heb. vi. 12, the "doctrine" on which so much stress is laid by St. John 2nd Epis. v. 10, and "the faith once delivered unto the saints," as noticed by St. Jude, Ep. v. 3. But there is nothing in these passages to require any such interpretation. Still more significant is the silence of the early church writers. None of the fathers before Rufinus, Greek or Latin, make any mention of the tradition to which he refers; and in all their controversies and discussions, we meet with no appeal whatever, to any such single and fixed form of words, as of established authority from the time of the Apostles. On the contrary, the way in which they touch the subject, shows clearly that no fixed form of this sort was in existence. They refer frequently to a christian rule or canon of faith, and occasionally give us the sum of its contents; but this always with such free variation, as plainly implies that it was regarded as standing in

the substance of what it taught, rather than in any particular forms of expression. Nay, the testimony of Rufinus himself, is conclusive as regards this point. He affirms expressly, that the form was not the same precisely in all the churches; but that additions were made to it, in some cases, in opposition to particular local heresies. He himself chose to follow, as he tells us, the form to which he stood pledged by his own baptism in the church at Aquileia. This, of course, he accepted, as of apostolical authority; and yet he admits, that it contained one article which was not found in the Latin or Greek symbols generally, as in use elsewhere at that time. This was the article on Christ's descent into hades. It has been made clear besides, that the article on the communion of saints, was wanting altogether, and the article on the life everlasting, to a very considerable extent, in the symbols of the first four centuries; the truth asserted in each case, being held only, as something involved in the article going immediately before. Such variations in the form of the creed, forbid the supposition of any fixed system of words, recognized and received as the composition of the Apostles. For no one, surely, would have felt at liberty to alter any such normal scheme of faith; and the use of other different forms altogether in Gaul, Spain, Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem, &c., must be counted in this case a problem admitting no rational solution.

Against such weight of evidence, the mere *inscription* of the symbol cannot be taken as of any particular force. It is called, indeed, the *Apostles' Creed*. But this title might have come into use gradually, under a mistaken idea of its being derived from the Apostles', when it had no such origin in fact; or the title may be taken as referring, in its original application, only to the substantial contents of the creed, and not to its particular phraseology and form. The last supposition, we have every reason to assume as true and correct. The testimony of Rufinus himself, while it shows that there was a current general tradition in the Church at that time, referring the authorship of the creed to the Apostles, indicates clearly enough at the same time, that this was to be understood only of its soul and substance, and not of the very terms in which it might happen to be uttered in any given case. For he does not pretend to confine the cha-

racter of apostolic dignity to any single form of it, as then in use, to the exclusion of all the rest; but takes it for granted, rather, that all the churches enjoyed in this respect, the same advantage. He seems to allow, indeed, a certain central normality to the creed as used at Rome; but chooses, nevertheless, as we have just seen, to abide by the form it carried in his own church at Aquileia, as strictly answerable to his idea of apostolical authority, although including a clause, which by his own confession, had no place in it as it had been in use to that time in other places. This shows plainly, in what sense he took it to be from the Apostles; and it was no doubt only in the same view, that the title which it now bears, came in the first place into general use.

The title indeed, was by no means confined originally to this particular symbol, as distinguished from others; but was applied frequently also to other symbols, that of Nice for instance, that of Constantinople, &c.; since with all their difference, they were regarded as alike embodying and representing in a true form, the one catholic faith of the Church as it had been handed down from the Apostles.

In this way, we are prepared at once to meet the vanity of those who affect to run away with the point now granted and proved, as though nothing more were needed to overthrow the apostolical credit of the Creed entirely, and turn it into the character of any mere ordinary human composition. Of the two extremes, it is hard to say which in this case most deserves our commiseration; the superstition, which in the face of all historical evidence to the contrary, still clings to the dream of an outward construction of the symbol as we now have it, on the part of the Apostles; or the shallow frivolity, that in detecting the untenable character of this prejudice, is ready at once to chuckle over its great discovery as the revelation of a "pious fraud," which it feels itself at liberty ever afterwards to scout from its presence as deserving of no regard whatever. With such mechanical *illumination*, that is so soon and so easily conducted to the end of its subject, it becomes us of course to have no patience or correspondence. Its superior wisdom is, after all, in the case before us, of a most sophomorical complexion. "What men call the Apostles' Creed," this spirit exclaims, "though very ancient, was no more an apos-

tolical invention than was Christmas-pie.”* Admitted, so far as any particular outward structure is concerned. But is *this* a discovery to be paraded in such style, over against the ancient fathers and the belief of the early Church? The puerility here falls not on the fathers, but on the modern rationalism, that thinks to dispose of the whole question in such poor outward style. Even Rufinus himself, refers the Creed to the Apostles, only in such a way, as to leave room for much liberty and variation in its external form. But all this was not felt, either by him or by the Church in general, to conflict at all with the reigning tradition, which carried back its origin to the time of the Apostles. The true power and value of the symbol were felt to stand, not in a given fixed version established for its universal use, but in the divine substance of its contents, which was capable of retaining its identity under very considerable changes of expression. So far as this was concerned, the christian catholic world considered itself in possession always of one and the same faith, however much freedom it might see fit to exercise with the utterance of it in different places. It was known well enough, that the general symbol admitted an utterance more or less full, as circumstances might require; that particular additions had been made to it with the progress of time, which did not belong to it in the beginning; and that it was not the same thing precisely, as to all its details, in any two leading provinces of the Church. And yet, notwithstanding all this, it was felt that the Church had but one Creed, and that this was of truly apostolical dignity and authority. It expressed not only the same faith that was held by the Apostles,

* See notice of Dr. Bushnell's address at Andover, in the October number of the Boston "Observatory," for 1848, p. 479: "We are at a loss to understand what is meant by the boasted progress of theological science. So far as we can see, the foot-prints of this progress are all *back-tracks*. The Puseyites are advancing stern-foremost towards the Dark Ages, and Dr. Bushnell is backing up to what he calls the 'Apostles' Creed,' which, though very ancient, was no more an apostolical invention than was Christmas-pie. Such hind-part-before 'progress,' like the 'man with his head turned,' with his reversed stridings and grotesque backslidings, does not promise that the 'new era of christianity,' which is said to be at hand, will be any improvement on the past." This may be allowed to be sufficiently *smart*; but is it not also sufficiently *profane*?

but it was their faith itself handed forward thus, under a living character, in the good confession of the Church from age to age. It was no product of private thinking here and there, as though the churches being left all to frame their several creeds in a separate way, had simply happened to come so near together, without yet reaching a full harmony; but it was something that came to them from a common source and under a common character, and which in this view was of broader and deeper force than any merely private confession as such. The unity of the Creed was determined by the realness of its contents, and the relation under which these were apprehended by all parts of the Church alike. It stood bound thus to the new order of life, which was revealed by Christ, through the Apostles, in the Church. Its stability was not in the outward letter, so much as in the inward spirit. It was written and preserved, as one of the fathers expresses it, not on plates of metal or stone, but on "fleshy tables of the heart," by the Spirit of the living God.*

In this way then, the old church tradition, as it is has passed down to us from the earliest times, is still entitled to our earnest respect; and we may easily see in fact, how with all its changes and variations, the symbol before us may be said to have taken its rise in the very age of the Apostles, and in a certain sense, under their very hands, and to have represented from the beginning, the one unvarying faith of the universal christian world. It needs no very close inspection to perceive that the manifold ways in which it was uttered come all to the same thing at last, and fall back always to a single fundamental formula as their general and common ground. They are at most, different translations, more or less full, of one and the same creed, comprising in itself the sense of the new creation in Christ Jesus.

It lies in the nature of the case, that the christian profession must have involved some common rule of faith from the beginning. "The word is nigh thee," Paul says, "even in thy mouth and in thy heart, that is the word of faith which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt

* Jerome, ep. lxi. as quoted by Bingham: *Ab apostolis traditum, non scribitur in charta et atramento, sed tabulis cordis carnalibus.*

believe in thy heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Rom. x. 8, 9. Faith comes to its proper completion only in the way of utterance; the inward word to be truly real must pass over into the form of an outward word; which becomes thus, at the same time, the bond of union and fellowship with others who have been made to partake of the same grace. Such an utterance of christian faith, in what may be considered its primary central form, is presented to us in the memorable confession of Peter: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God;" or, as we have it in another place: "To whom shall we go but unto Thee? Thou hast the words of eternal life; and we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." (Matt. xvi. 16; John, vi. 68, 69.) The whole Creed, as we shall see hereafter, is in truth wrapped up in this foundation article, and grows forth from it with inward necessity. Afterwards we have it, more full and clear, in the form of baptism, as presented by our Saviour himself: "Go teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Christ is the revelation of God, under the three-fold character here brought into view; and this revelation may be said to constitute the sum and substance of christianity, as the object of the faith we profess in coming into his Church. To be baptized into Christ, is to be baptized into the whole mystery of the Trinity, as inseparably joined with his person; and the formal acknowledgement of this mystery accordingly, in the way of solemn response or confession, was associated with the ordinance, no doubt, from the beginning. It is allowed almost universally, that reference to such a confession is made by St. Peter, where he speaks of the answer of a "good conscience," (1 Pet. iii. 21,) as necessary to be added to the outward washing of water, to complete the idea of baptism. The good profession of Timothy "before many witnesses," (1 Tim. vi. 12,) is taken by many to refer also to the same thing. It is not necessary to suppose, that the profession thus required of all who came into the Church, was even in the age of the Apostles, under the same invariable form. It was sometimes more and sometimes less

full, but it always carried in it, explicitly or by implication, a full assent to the contents of the baptismal formula. How far it may have become usual, before the death of the Apostles, to connect with this foundation the secondary clauses of the Creed as it now stands, cannot be clearly determined. But no one familiar with the early history of Christianity, can well fail to see that this must have been the case, at least to some extent; and the probability is certainly strong, that early in the second century, if not before, nearly all the particulars now embraced in it were found more or less in current use.

Still, as before said, the current use itself remained irregular and free. Each church considered itself at liberty to employ its own particular style of expressing its faith; just as each exercised the same sort of liberty in its general liturgy; while at the same time the faith itself was considered to be of a common character, belonging alike to all the churches and handed down from the Apostles. The variety and freedom thus allowed, were not suffered to trench upon the unity of the general tradition or rule. In the midst of it all, this was still felt to be one and the same, and is frequently appealed to accordingly, by the early writers as of acknowledged and easily intelligible authority.

Irenaeus speaks of such an "immoveable rule of truth," belonging to every christian by his baptism; and describes it as proclaiming: "One God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven, earth, the sea, and all that they contain; one Jesus Christ, the Son of God, incarnate for our salvation; and one Holy Spirit, who by the prophets preached the dispensations and the advents; the generation from the Virgin, the passion, the resurrection from the dead, and the ascension with the flesh into heaven of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Beloved, and his coming from heaven in the glory of the Father, to gather all things together into one and to raise all human flesh, that to Jesus Christ our Lord, and God and Saviour and king, according to the good pleasure of the invisible Father, every knee may bow of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth, and every tongue confess, and that he may execute just judgment upon all; remanding wicked spirits, and sinning apostate angels, and the impious, unrighteous, disobedient and blasphemous among men, into eter-

nal fire; but on the righteous, and holy, and such as have kept his commandments and continued in his love, some from the beginning and others from their repentance, bestowing life, the gift of immortality and everlasting glory.”* Irenaeus does not mean, of course, to quote literally in this case, any certain formula, as of established and fixed use in the churches. His whole manner implies the contrary, and may be taken as evidence that no fixed formula of this sort, as afterwards settled in our present Apostles' Creed, was then in ecclesiastical use. But he appeals nevertheless to what he regards as a well defined and clearly intelligible rule of faith, as forming the substance of the christian profession; and it is easy enough to see, that this agrees entirely with the contents of the Creed now mentioned, showing it to reach back in the use of the Church, so far as these are concerned, to the age in which he lived. We have his testimony moreover, that it was in this view of apostolical and universal authority. The Church, he tells us, disseminated throughout the whole world, held it from the Apostles and their disciples, keeping it carefully, as though she occupied but a single house, accepting its contents everywhere as with one heart and soul, and preaching them as from one and the same mouth. “The dialects in which it is uttered are different; but the tradition is in force the same. The churches founded in Germany, have no other faith and doctrine; nor those in Spain; nor those among the Celts; nor those in the East; nor those in Egypt; nor those in Lybia; nor those of more central situation; but as the sun, God's workmanship, is over the whole globe one and the same, so also the evangelical truth shines everywhere and illuminates all who are willing to come to its light.”

The testimony of Irenaeus is very important, as illustrating both sides of the true doctrine concerning the origin of the Creed. It started with no such fixed form of words, in the beginning, as it carries in its repetition now. Irenaeus, and the Church in his time, knew of no apostolical tradition in this outward form, and none should be pretended by any part of the modern Church.

* *Adv. haeres. lib. 1. c. x.* Quoted in full by Bingham, *Orig. Eccles. lib. 10. cap. iv.*

But Irenaeus, and the Church in his time, were perfectly familiar notwithstanding, with the idea of a christian *regula fidei* or creed, of universal force, and in actual use among all the churches. Still more, this rule was regarded as strictly and truly the *Apostles' Creed*. It was no product of private opinion, and it stood not at all in articles of convention and agreement adopted by the general christian body. It was accepted everywhere as a system handed down from the Apostles; not merely as supposed to be in the spirit of their teaching, but as carrying forward in the faith of the Church, the very substance and contents of the divine revelation itself, which they were sent to proclaim. Finally, we gather from Irenaeus, that this Rule of Faith, in living use with the universal Church of his time, embraced in itself, under a free character, all the leading features of the Apostles' Creed, as afterwards settled in its present form; in which view it may well continue to challenge the reverential homage of all Christendom still, and onward to the end of the world, as a true apostolical symbol. This testimony of Irenaeus, it is well always to bear in mind, carries us back to the second century, and into close proximity thus with the immediate disciples of the Apostles themselves.

Tertullian appeals frequently, in the same free way, to the christian Rule of Faith, and recapitulates several times its general contents, always in harmony with the sum of it as given by Irenaeus, for the purpose of confuting and confounding the heretics of his own time. His recapitulations are indeed always different, sometimes more and sometimes less full, showing that the Creed was more life than mere word; but they assume throughout, notwithstanding the clear identity belonging to it, as a single apostolical tradition.* The amount of it is always: One God, the almighty maker of the world; his Son, Jesus Christ, born of the Virgin Mary, constituted Messiah, crucified under Pontius Pilate, raised the third day, exalted to heaven and set at the right hand of God, from whence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead; the Holy Ghost sent forth vicariously, according to his promise, to sanctify those that believe in his name; the res-

* "Regula fidei una omnino est, sola immobilis et irreformabilis."

urrection of the flesh, the damnation of the wicked, and the reception of the righteous into eternal life and the blessedness of heaven.* This rule, he says, instituted by Christ, allows no questions, other than such as spring from heresy and go to make heretics; it is older than all heresies; their novelty, as exposed by it, serves to establish its antiquity; to know nothing beyond it, is to know all that is necessary.†

Origen, in like manner, gives a summary statement of the heads of christian doctrine, "as plainly received by apostolical tradition," which corresponds in substance with the same rule.

From Cyprian, we have an insight into the general Creed of the Church in Africa, as it stood in his time. The Novatians, he admits, proposed the same questions at baptism that were used in the Church catholic, calling for faith in God the Father, his Son Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost. But still, he contends, that as schismatics, their rule and interrogation could not be regarded as the same; "for when they say: Dost thou believe the remission of sins and eternal life through the holy Church? they interrogate falsely, since they have no Church." This shows that the whole Creed, nearly as we have it now, was in common use in Africa, at this time, as an apostolical rule of faith, in connection with the baptismal service.‡

These private testimonies show the presence everywhere in the early Church of an evangelical tradition, agreeing in its general contents with the Creed as it now stands, and accepted as of strictly apostolical origin and weight. They show also, that this tradition was regarded, not as a slavish form of words, but a free doctrine rather, that might be uttered in various ways. Still it would be a great mistake, to conceive of it as wholly loose and floating, in the style of these notices. In the nature of the case, the different churches must have held it from the beginning, under some regular and standing form. This may have varied some with the progress of time, as circumstances seemed to call

* *De veland. virg. c. i De praescript. adv. haereticos, c. xiii. Advers. Prax. c. ii.* Quoted in full by Bingham, *Orig. Eccl. lib. 10. cap. iv.*

† "*Nihil ultra scire, omnia scire est.*"

‡ *Epist. lxxvi. ad Magnum.*

for new points and specifications; and in this way, there would be room of course, for considerable peculiarity in the several churches, compared one with another; but the reigning type of the creed in each case must have continued always the same. So much may be said to lie in the primitive design of the thing itself. It was the profession of faith that accompanied the sacrament of baptism, and that grew originally out of the baptismal formula as spoken by our Lord in its institution. Its use in the first centuries, was specially for those who were about to be introduced into the Church by this holy sacrament, after having gone through all proper previous steps, in the way of preparation for the solemnity. It was first delivered to the catechumen by the bishop, (*traditio symboli*) orally as it would seem, though possibly at times, also in writing; and then afterwards, in the course of a few days, publicly spoken back again and returned, (*redditio symboli*,) as being effectually laid up in the meantime in the candidate's memory.* This was followed by an open solemn profession on the part of the candidate, at the time of his baptism itself, in the way of response to distinct interrogatories embracing the symbol in its several parts. Such an "answer of good conscience," is referred to by the earliest ecclesiastical writers wherever the subject comes in their way, and is to be regarded as starting undoubtedly in the practice of the Apostles themselves. All this implies, however, a short standing form, of established use in each particular church. Cyprian gives us a glimpse into the general African formula, as it was everywhere of force in the first part of the third century. Other sections of the Church had similar standing forms; some more full perhaps than others; those of the East different from those of the West; but all handed down from the earliest time, and palpably expressing one and the same faith, as they belonged to one and the same baptism.

In the fourth century, these public formularies begin to come

* The brief form of this confession, says Neander, as a matter of course, did not need a written communication; it was to pass over into the soul of the catechumen, out of the living word into the life; it must be the utterance of his own conviction. Christianity stands primarily, not in letter, but life. So Augustine: *Hujus rei significandae causa, audiendo symbolum discitur, nec in tabulis vel in aliqua materia, sed in corde scribitur.*

more distinctly into view ; always, however, in such a way as to show them in full, actual, and undisputed possession of the authority they claim, as of the most ancient right and force. Take for instance, the symbol then in use at Rome. It is not specially presented to us, before this time. But what could well be more monstrous, than to fancy that it was for this reason of any comparatively recent date. It meets us in no such form ; it tolerates from us no such doubt. We might just as well question the antiquity of the church itself in Rome, as question the antiquity of its creed. We meet it not in the fourth century, as a new thing, the creation, possibly, only of that age, or the one going before ; it is the old baptismal symbol, as all the world then might know it to have been in use there from time immemorial ; it is the christian rule of faith, the creed of the Apostles, in the particular form in which it had come to be woven into the very life of this ancient church from the beginning. So with the church at Aquileia ; and so with the churches generally. Their particular creeds are regarded always as dating, in their main character, from the most remote christian antiquity.

The very early origin of nearly all the elements presented in these church symbols of the fourth century, is shown not merely by the outward tradition going along with them in each case, and their general agreement with one another, but very strikingly also by the historical relations that are found imbedded as it were in their own form. The Creed is, of course, primarily positive, and not simply negative, in its contents. It affirms a substantial reality, which is not produced in any way by the mere denial of the various errors and false doctrines to which it stands opposed. At the same time, to be thus positive and affirmative, it must include in itself, from the start, a steady protest against such false doctrines as they came in its way. The christian consciousness can evolve itself only by a process of continual critical separation, by which all that is foreign to its true life is sundered from this, and made to stand over against it as its antichristian opposite and contradiction. It lies moreover in the nature of this process, that the errors which are thus cast out will not come into view confusedly and by chance, but must be conditioned and determined always by the posture which has been reached by the

christian consciousness itself at the time of their appearance. In the history of the Church, accordingly, each age has its own forms of heresy, as well defined, we may say, as the successive geological formations that show themselves in the structure of the earth. The "fossil remains" of each period, are found wrought into the solid rock by which it is represented for all subsequent time.

In this way, the Apostles' Creed, aside from all outward historical evidence in the case, falls back plainly, in its main composition, to the earliest period of the Church. Its various propositions carry in them, beyond all doubt, a reference to certain false tendencies, which at the time of their original utterance, were actively at hand, and working towards the overthrow of the christian faith. This has been very generally seen and felt; and great pains have been taken by such writers as Vossius, Pearson, Basnage, King, &c., to identify the relation of the several clauses of the Creed, in this way, to specific forms of heresy mentioned in early church history. Thus one clause is explained as springing out of opposition to Ebion, Cerinthus, and others; a second, as in contradiction to Menander, Cerdo and Saturninus; and so most of the rest, as directed against Gnostic, Montanistic, Novatian, or other errors. Walch in his *Introd. in Lib. Symb.* p. 101, justifies this view in a general way, while he considers, at the same time, that it has been carried by some quite too far. Bull and Grabe are disposed to dispute its correctness a good deal farther; the latter especially, holding that all the clauses of the Creed, with the exception of those on the *descent into hades* and the *communion of saints*, (possibly also that on *the church*.) came into use in the age of the Apostles themselves, by their authority, or at all events, with their knowledge and approbation, and are to be explained out of relations existing at that time. The question cannot be brought probably to any such absolute determination as this; but in any case, a proper familiarity with the early history of the Church, must lead us to feel that we have no right to come lower than the first part of the second century, in order to fix, to the extent just mentioned, the rise of the several parts of the Creed. The errors excluded by them, are such as lie close around the inmost life of christianity. They

belong to the very first stage of the process by which this life was required to unfold itself in the form of history. They come in the way of that process, by a sort of inward necessity, from the very start. We meet them, accordingly, under full revelation, in the second century. There is no occasion then to descend lower than this, for the rise of the Creed. It was *needed* for the second century; it forms the proper utterance of the christian life as it then stood, in the face of all sorts of Gnostic and Ebionitic unbelief. Still more; we have good evidence that those spurious forms of thinking were actively at work in the century before. Gnosticism, as it meets us in the second century, sprang not abruptly and with a single stroke, like a full armed Minerva, on the arena of church history. We have traces enough in the New Testament, of the chaotic workings at least of the same antichristian spirit in the very age of the Apostles. Indeed, to assert itself at all, the christian life must be supposed to have been brought into conflict with the substance of these primitive forms of heresy from the beginning. It was then practically an utterance of faith from the first, answerable to these circumstances; and no good reason can be shown, why the utterance should not have passed over, in the apostolic period itself, to a free form of words also in substantial agreement with the ancient symbol as it now stands. Let any one but have in his mind a lively sense of the terrible aberrations from the truth, that are revealed to us darkly from the first days of the infant Church, in the writings of Paul and John and Peter and Jude, and he will not be likely to feel that there is any necessity whatever for coming down to the heresies of a later time, as broached by Cerdo, Marcion, Saturninus, Valentinus, Basilides, &c., much less to the age of the Novatians, or that of the Donatists, in order to explain the sense and force of the testimony here handed down in the Apostles' name. Was not the same testimony, at almost every point, called for by the relations of the Church in the first century? And if so, what right have we to overlook these altogether, and refer its origin mainly to another time? No one, at all events, can study attentively the structure of the Creed, without finding in its whole formation clear monumental evidence of the very highest christian antiquity.

With the advance of time, as the aspects of heresy changed, the old elementary style of the Creed was made to undergo naturally, in different quarters, partial and circumstantial modifications, in the way of direct testimony over against such new errors. 'Thus, for instance, in the church at Aquileia, the first article read in the time of Rufinus: I believe in God the Father Almighty, *invisible and impassible* ; with clear reference to the Sabellian and Patripassian heresies, which affirmed that it was the Father himself who had become incarnate and suffered under Pontius Pilate. This symbol also included the article on the *descent to hades*, as we have before seen, when it had no place, as Rufinus supposed, in the other creeds generally existing in his time. In the Oriental Church, the tendency of the Creed to adjust itself, by expansion and modification, to new necessities, prevailed more actively than it did among the Latins ; by reason of the manifold phases and forms, in which false doctrine was always starting into fresh life, on that field, during the first ages. Thus we find in Cyril, the creed of the church at Jerusalem, as it had stood before the Council of Nice, bearing upon it such significant amplification at various points.* Still, different from this again, was the old creed used at Caesarea, in Palestine, recited by Eusebius, in the Nicene Council, as the formula of faith which he had received there at his baptism. It approached closely to the symbol adopted by this Council. It is a probable supposition, that the Nicene Creed was made to embrace the reigning type of the older Oriental symbols, with such additions only as were needed to meet effectually the false doctrine of Arius.† As issued at Nice, however, (a. 325,) it was made to close abruptly with the article of the Holy Ghost, leaving out all that should follow

* "I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, maker of all things visible and invisible: And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all days, the God, by whom all things were created, who was incarnate and made man ; was crucified and buried, the third day rose from the dead, and ascended into the heavens, and sat down at the right hand of the Father ; who shall come to judge the quick and the dead, and of whose kingdom there shall be no end. And in one Holy Ghost, the Paraclete, who spake by the prophets ; in one baptism of repentance for the remission of sins ; in one holy catholic church ; and in the resurrection of the flesh and in life everlasting."

† Walch. *Introd. in Lib. Symb.* p. 20.

concerning the Church and the course of the new creation in Christ Jesus; by which some have been led to question the presence of these concluding topics in the earlier creeds altogether. But we have ample evidence to show the contrary; and the omission here is accounted for very easily, by the consideration that the object of the Nicene Creed was simply to repel the errors of Arius and his party in regard to the Trinity. The topics following had not been called in controversy, and were left to stand untouched accordingly, as already found in the creeds generally. Subsequently, by the second general Council, (held at Constantinople, a. 381,) this omission was formally supplied, and the Creed re-adopted, with some other improvements, in the form in which it is now known and used; with the exception only of the clause that makes the procession of the Holy Ghost to be *from the Son*, as well as from the Father, which was added at a later period by the Latin Church. The older Oriental creeds naturally gave way to this œcumenical Nicene, or rather Niceno-constantinopolitan, symbol. It passed very soon into general use, as it would seem in the administration of baptism; and was adopted subsequently into the stated liturgical church service. It is agreed on all hands, however, that the practice of reciting it in this way, was not introduced before the middle of the fifth century.*

Among the earlier symbols of the Western Church, which differed somewhat among themselves, as we have already seen, though their reigning type was always the same, a sort of central dignity and pre-eminence was gradually claimed and allowed in favor of the formula used at Rome.† When speaking of the occasional slight variations of the Creed, in different churches, Rufinus tells us, that nothing of this sort was to be found in the Roman church; a fact which he accounts for in this way, that no heresy had started there, and that those who were to receive baptism were required always to repeat the creed before the whole congregation, which stood ready at once to object to the slightest

* See Bingham, *Orig. Eccl. Lib. x. cap. 4. § 14, 16, 17.*

† *Credatur symbolo apostolorum, quod ecclesia Romana intemeratum semper custodit et seriat.—Ambrose, Ep. 81.*

innovation in its terms. Still Rufinus chose to abide by his own symbol, as he held it from the church at Aquileia; and whatever the stability of the Roman formula might have been previously, we find it at a later period consenting to complete itself by the admission of a little material at least, which did not belong to it from the beginning. As it stood in the time of Rufinus, it lacked the articles on the *descent to hades*, and the *life everlasting*, as well as the title *catholic*, in connection with the Church. In reality, however, of course, the descent to hades was involved in the clause on *Christ's death and burial*, and the life everlasting in the idea of the *resurrection*; while the Church, as an object of faith, includes the conception of catholicity as an attribute inseparable from its constitution. When precisely the Roman creed was brought to include, in common use, the separate distinct utterance of the points now noticed, is not known. They were, however, in due time fairly installed in their place; and in this form, having come in the fifth and sixth centuries into general use, it has come down to us, with the veneration of the whole christian world, as the standard edition of the ancient rule of faith, the best and truest representation of the fundamental realities of the christian religion, the proper Apostles' Creed.

In this character, it forms the basis of all sound christian profession, in the Protestant Church no less than in the Roman Catholic. In the great religious revolution of the sixteenth century, its credit and authority remained inviolate and unimpaired. The object of the Reformation was, to sweep aside the rubbish which threatened to smother the life of the ancient faith, not by any means to bring this faith itself out of the way. Both divisions of the Protestant Church accordingly, the Lutheran and the Reformed, united in acknowledging the binding authority of the ancient oecumenical symbols, and especially the root of all symbols as found in the Apostles' Creed. They did not pretend to abjure all connection with the past, but professed to build on a foundation already laid, and to carry forward a work already long since begun. In the Lutheran Church, the three primary Creeds, (Apostolical, Nicene and Athanasian,) are made to precede the Augsburg Confession, in the Form of Concord; to show, says Walch, "that Lutherans embrace not a new doctrine, but such

as is old and apostolical, and profess thus the truly catholic faith." How fully it lay at the foundation of all christianity with Luther himself, we all know. It was part of his piety, a necessary means of grace with him, he tells us himself, to repeat the Creed with the Lord's Prayer, throughout his life, in the spirit of a little child. His sense of the authority that belongs to the ancient catholic faith altogether, was very earnest and deep. "It is dangerous and terrible," he writes in his memorable letter to Albert of Prussia, "to hear or believe anything, against the united testimony, faith and doctrine of the universal holy christian Church, as held now and from the beginning, for 1500 years, throughout the world." The Creed, of course, occupies a conspicuous place in his catechism. In this, however, we see only an image of the universal Protestant feeling in that age. Every such formulary of religious instruction was expected, as a matter of course, to take in the Creed, along with the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments.

The Reformed Church here was of one mind with the Lutheran. Thus in Calvin's Catechism, the first section treats of *Truth*; which is said to have the sum of its contents in the "formula of confession held in common by all christians; commonly called the *Apostles' Creed*, and always received from the beginning among the pious; as being either derived from the mouth of the Apostles, or faithfully collected from their writings." After this it is recited and expounded in full. So in the admirable symbol of the Palatinate, the Heidelberg Catechism, "it is the articles of our catholic undoubted christian faith," as comprehended in the same Creed, which are made to underlie the doctrine of salvation from beginning to end. It formed part of the regular church service, in the Reformed liturgies, accompanied their baptisms, and entered into their celebration of the holy eucharist. The Gallican Confession, art. 5. approves the three Creeds, Apostolic, Nicene and Athanasian, as agreeing with the written word of God. "We do willingly receive the three creeds," it is said in the Belgic Confession, art. 9, "namely, that of the Apostles, of Nice, and of Athanasius; likewise that which conformable thereunto, is agreed upon by the ancient fathers." In the Helvetic Confession, art. 11, the symbols of the first four

general councils, together with that of Athanasius, are cordially approved and professed. The three Creeds are endorsed in the Articles of the Church of England, as worthy of all reception. In the Declaration of Thorn, we are said to be all baptized into the Apostles' Creed, as a compendium of the christian faith; and the Nicene and Constantinopolitan Creeds are taken still farther as a sure interpretation of the same heavenly doctrine, forming thus the common ground on which all who profess Christ, must of necessity come together, and the one firm foundation against which the gates of hell shall never prevail. It is part of the true Protestant faith, undoubtedly, as held by the Reformed Church, no less than the Lutheran, to abide by the ancient christian Creed. Whatever else it may include, it starts from this and rests in it throughout, as its sure and necessary foundation.

It must be acknowledged, however, that the honor thus put upon the Creed in the original Protestant Confessions, has undergone, practically at least, no slight eclipse, in a wide portion of the modern Protestant world. So far as Rationalism has had power in Europe, the authority of the ancient church faith, of course, fell into discredit; and it is felt now by those who seek the revival of pure christianity, that all turns on the power of the Church to intone with full emphasis again, in her public formularies and services, every single article of the *symbolum apostolicum*, most especially those of the incarnation, the descent into hades, and the resurrection of the body. But the low esteem for the Creed, of which we now speak, has not been confined to Rationalism, technically so styled. We see it widely displayed in other sections also of the Protestant world, which we are accustomed to distinguish as orthodox and evangelical. The other great disease of the Protestant system, the spirit of *Sect*, shows a striking affinity here, no less than at other points, with the Rationalistic tendency of which it is the natural counterpart. Sects, in proportion as they *are* sects, that is in the same measure that they lack all sympathy with the idea of the Church, and substitute sectarianism for catholicity, will be found all the world over to have no taste for the Creed. They may possibly extend to it some cold token of respect, as a venerable relic of early christianity; but it has not their heart, falls not in with their habit of

christianity, and is admitted to no place of course in their worship, public or private.

More than this, *Puritanism*, which we do not wish to confound certainly with Rationalism and the Sect System, although it carries in itself undoubtedly a more direct tendency towards both than can be said to lie in original Protestantism, being in truth, an advance on this, whether for weal or for woe, and such an advance as places it in closer natural proximity to the evils now mentioned; Puritanism, we say, taking the term in the broad sense, to designate a special form of the religious life, which is just as well defined in history as early Protestantism itself, may be said to carry with it this universal character, that it makes no account practically of the Apostles' Creed. The remark is not made here of course in the way of censure or reproach, and ought not to be taken as disrespectful in any way to the system in question. We are dealing simply with the history of the subject; and the fact now stated, is one which no well informed person will pretend to call in question. It matters not that the authority of the Creed may be recognized, in some general way, in this or that old confession still retained in the Church; so far as the Puritan spirit in its modern form is found to prevail in any ecclesiastical body, all actual use of the Creed, and all hearty interest in it, are to the same extent wanting. It is not used, for example, in the religious education of families. Children, generally, are not made to lay it up in their minds, as the sum and substance of the christian faith. It comes not into view in catechetical instruction; if indeed this itself be still upheld, under any form, in regular use. It is not repeated of course in public worship; the minister who should take upon him any such innovation as that, would be suspected of some secret hankering after Rome. It is not made in any way a rule of christian profession or public teaching. It is quite common, for instance, in Congregationalist churches, to make use of "covenants," or forms of profession and engagement, when members are received into full communion, each congregation varying the form to suit its own taste; but it would be hard to find one among all, that would be content to make use of the Apostles' Creed in this way, or even to be

guided by it at all in the construction of its own formulary.* The feeling is, plainly enough, that this old symbol has had its day, and is now antiquated if not absolutely obsolete; that it bears upon it the marks of a rude and imperfect christianity, not without some touch of tendency towards superstition; that the evangelical faith of the present day may be more clearly and satisfactorily expressed, in other schemes and summaries altogether, any one of which, as taken from the Bible and common christian experience, is to be held just as much entitled to honor as that which is thus falsely ascribed to the Apostles. It is felt to be on the whole a loose and careless production; without much plan or method, and governed by no principle in the choice of its articles; introducing some points of no necessary importance, and leaving out several others that should be counted indispensable. One thing is beyond all controversy certain, that if Puritanism were called upon to form a fundamental, universal christian creed, it would fall on something very different from this ancient symbol, both in conception and style. All this, as before said, is noticed

* A striking exemplification of this independence is furnished in the manufacture of a new confession of faith, a few years since, for the use of the *Protestant Armenian Church*, lately started, under the auspices of our New England missionaries, in the city of Constantinople. In other ages, the casting of a creed for a whole church has been counted an enterprise of no common size and weight; but here, it was the work of one or two hands only, brought happily to a full conclusion in the course of a few hours! To expedite the business, and guard against all outward bias, the precaution was adopted, we are told, of shutting out from all consultation whatever had been adopted by any part of the Church as of symbolical authority previously, (the primitive foundation Creed of the Oriental Church, of course, along with the rest,) so as to draw the whole by purely *original* deduction direct from the Bible, as *traditionally understood in New England*. Not a syllable accordingly does this new confession contain, in recognition of the ancient symbol of universal Christendom. The greatest marvel of all, perhaps, is, that this bold way of going to work in so momentous a case, should be quietly accepted so generally, (by the whole American Board for instance,) as nothing out of the way, a mere matter of course. So, it will be remembered, the late World Convention at London, in undertaking to construct an œcumenical platform for the union of *evangelical* sects, found it necessary to ignore the Apostles' Creed in full, and brought in a new set of articles altogether of its own invention, as better suited for the purpose.

here neither in the way of blame nor of praise, but simply as a matter of history which is open to common observation. In this view, however, it is entitled to earnest attention. The fact, in its own nature, is curious. Nor can it easily be allowed to be of only small significance. Such variation from the mind and posture of the ancient Church, in regard to the Creed, implies necessarily a serious variation from the life of primitive christianity in general. The difference between Puritanism and original Protestantism here, argues necessarily a very considerable remove in the whole inward habit and being of the first from the proper spiritual constitution of the second. Such a fact has a right to challenge notice. Whether it be looked upon as right or wrong, an occasion for gratulation or a reason for censure and complaint, it is entitled at all events to earnest consideration, and should if possible be fairly understood and explained.

The force of what is now said will become still more evident when we take into view the interior constitution of the Creed, its rise and structure in the living sphere of faith, to which it primarily and natively belongs.

J. W. N.

ART. VIII.—THE PROGRESS OF ETHNOLOGY. *An Account of recent Archæological, Philological and Geographical researches in various parts of the globe, tending to elucidate the physical history of man.* By John Russell Bartlett, Cor. Sec. of the American Ethnological Society, and foreign Cor. Sec. of the New York Hist. Society. Second edition; New York: Bartlett & Welford, 7, Astor House. 1847.

No department of inquiry which tends to confirm the truth of Sacred Scripture, ought to be regarded as trivial. All researches

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NO. III.

ART. XIII.—THE APOSTLES' CREED.

II.—Its Inward Constitution and Form.

To estimate properly the merits and claims of the *apostolical symbol*, it is not enough to be acquainted with the facts of its history outwardly considered. We need still more to understand its interior history; its rise and progress under an inward view; the idea which is developed in its constitution, and the manner in which the development is to be regarded as taking place.

In the first place, the Creed is no work of mere outward *authority*, imposed on the Church by Christ or his Apostles. It would help its credit greatly in the eyes of some, no doubt, if it could be made to appear under this view. Their idea of christianity is such as involves prevailingly, the notion of a given or fixed scheme of things to be believed and done, propounded for the use of men, on the authority of heaven, in a purely mechanical and outward way. If there were evidence that some several of the Apostles together, or even the Apostle Paul, or the Apostle John alone, had formed the Creed as it now stands, and handed it over in this shape as something finished and complete, to the keeping of the Church, it would be looked upon, of course, as at once a

divine tradition, the sacredness of which it would be no better than infidelity to doubt or call in question. It is plain, however, from the history already presented, that no such origin as this can be asserted in its favor. It is not in this sense it has claimed to be apostolical from the beginning. Its relation to the faith of the Church, is not that of an outward dead *traditum* or deposit, in any way. On the contrary, the idea of such a relation in the case, contradicts its whole nature. In no such form could it be the glorious christian *creed*, which we now find it to be in fact.

In the next place, it is no product of *reflection*, exercised on the contents of christianity, as an object of thought and study. This it might be conceived to have been, in two ways. We can suppose some gifted individual, well versed in the great truths of the gospel, to have addressed himself to the work of reducing them to the form of such a brief system or compend, in a merely private character; or we may imagine a body of competent persons met together for this purpose, as a council or synod, and furnishing the formulary as the result of their joint deliberation and discussion. This last view, especially, would suit the taste of many; more particularly if it could be made to appear that the Bible had been taken as the source and rule of all evidence in the case, and that the formulary was exhibited throughout as an extract simply, and summary, of what is to be found in its inspired pages. It would assist the respect of such persons greatly for the Apostles' Creed, if in the acknowledged default of a strictly apostolical *imprimatur*, it were possible still to refer to some ecclesiastical convention of this sort, in which with all due formality and deliberation it was brought out for the use of the Church, at the very beginning of its history; if that famous synod at Jerusalem, for instance, or some other solemnly convened for the purpose after the destruction of Jerusalem, were known to have taken the matter in hand, (after the fashion of the great *world convention* in London,) and to have produced finally, what they conceived to be, in this shape, a truly *scriptural* platform of christian doctrine. But it must be admitted that the ancient Creed comes down to us in no such form as this. We ask in vain for the private study or private theological brain to which it owes its birth; and we are equally disappointed when

we think of tracing its origin to any more public theological or ecclesiastical source. In this respect, its rise is more obscure seemingly, than that of all modern confessions. It comes with far less "observation," than the Heidelberg Catechism, or that of Westminster. No trumpet tongue proclaims its "articles of agreement," for the whole world to hear, as in the case of the *late* "Evangelical Alliance." There is no evidence whatever, of plan, or calculation, or forethought, of any sort, in its production; not even to the extent of what is implied in the fabrication of a modern church "covenant," for the use of a single congregation. There is nothing in the case to match even the independent private manufacture of that new creed lately originated for the use of the Protestant Armenian Church, in Constantino-ple. We can see and understand easily how *that* was made; the missionary goes into his upper room, takes the Bible into his hands, forgets as far as possible all creeds besides, and so through the medium of his own head, with such theological shape as it has already at hand, contrives and puts together a scheme or plan of necessary christian truths; which in such form is presented, at the end of a few hours, all done and complete, and at once ready for use. All this however, we miss in the Creed which bears the name of the Apostles. No one can tell exactly whence or how it comes. Its beginning is vague and uncertain. It seems to spring up at different points, and its appearance is not at once well settled and defined. Plainly there has been no method or plan, no process of intellectual reckoning, no comparison of views and observations, no outlay of theological thought and reflection, in the production of the Apostles' Creed. The authorship of it, be it such as it may, does not hold at all in the form of any such relation to its contents as would be implied in this supposition. It is not the work of any mind, or set of minds, placing themselves over against the contents of christianity in the way of consideration, holding them off as it were objectively for the notice of thought, and so reducing them to logical statement for the understanding. We hear of no such process; and we read no trace of it in the formulary itself. That is not in any view its constitution and form. The Creed, it deserves to be well understood and well borne in mind, is not a confession

in the common modern sense. It is not like a catechism. It is no summary of christian doctrine, no theory of divinity in miniature form. To be appreciated properly, it must be apprehended under a wholly different character.

We would not be understood, in what is here said, as undervaluing or disparaging at all, schemes of christian doctrine; as though the vital power of religion must be supposed to suffer, from any attempt to make it the subject of intellectual contemplation. There is a certain way, indeed, of using the understanding here, which is not to be approved; when its notions and abstractions, namely, are made to pass for the matter or substance of religion itself, as though this stood primarily in such mere acts of thought. To make reflection or intelligence, in this way, the principle of christianity, is to fall at once fully over into the arms of rationalism. But allowing the christian substance or reality to be already at hand, under a different form, there is no reason why it should not be made the object of thought, like any other material with which the mind is called to work. On the contrary, it lies in the very conception of christianity, that it should thus take possession of the thinking of men, as well as of their outward activity. It seeks continually to become objective, in the way of reflection and knowledge. Where there is no religious thought, no doctrinal scheme for the understanding, no theological science, it is in vain to expect that the life of religion can be truly prosperous in any other view. We undervalue not systematic divinity. We speak not a word against modern catechisms and confessions. They are all good and highly necessary in their place. Only we must not think of the Apostles' Creed, as belonging to the same order of ecclesiastical productions. It is no work of religious reflection, no product of the understanding, no digest in the form of thought. It holds altogether in a different element, and carries in itself quite another constitution.

What then is the true distinctive character of the Creed? How has it come to pass, and in what form does it now challenge our homage and respect?

We have the answer in its name. It is the *Creed*; that is, the substance of christianity in the form of faith. Here we reach

at once its last ground and inmost constitution. It holds immediately and entirely in the element of *faith*, and it can be rightly appreciated only as it is apprehended under this view.

Are not, however, our ordinary confessions and catechisms, in this respect, of the same nature? Is it not precisely as compends or summaries of the christian faith, the things which christianity requires us to believe, that they are prized and counted sacred?

They are indeed, we reply, summaries of what is regarded as the christian faith, and it is only as the contents of this faith are truly represented by them, that they can deserve respect; but still they do not hold immediately and directly in the life of faith itself, as the very element and inward form of their representation. They give us the contents of faith, as projected in the first place from the mind which has them, and made the object of thought or reflection. This reflection is not itself faith, but something different from it altogether; which only in this case employs its force on what faith has caused to be at hand for its use. So apprehended, truth is before the mind not immediately, but mediately. The mind separates itself, as it were, from its own contents under the first form, and then turns round to gaze upon them, for the purpose of coming if possible to some clear knowledge of their sense. The process is indirect, circuitous, reflex; whereas in the first case, the apprehension is immediate, and without any intervening mental operation. The difference between such mediate and immediate apprehension, is very great, and is not confined of course to the sphere of religion. All knowledge starts in the second form, and from this passes forward into the first. So we have said already, the substance of christianity carries in itself the same necessary tendency. It requires to be translated into both thought and action. In this mediated form, however, it is no longer the same thing precisely which it was before. Thus it is, that our summaries of faith, in the form which they carry as the product of theological reflection, are always materially different from the Apostles' Creed. They represent christianity under a reflex view; whereas in the Creed we have it in its primitive form, as the direct immediate utterance of the christian faith itself.

The full import of this distinction requires, however, that we

should now direct our attention more closely to the nature of faith. If our conception of this be defective and false, it must involve the whole subject for us necessarily in more or less confusion.

Faith, it is said, Heb. xi. 1, is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. With this agrees well the definition given of it in the Heidelberg Catechism: "True faith is not only a certain knowledge, whereby I hold for truth all that God has revealed to us in his word, but also an assured confidence, which the Holy Ghost works by the gospel in my heart, that not only to others, but to me also, remission of sin, everlasting righteousness and salvation, are freely given by God, merely of grace, only for the sake of Christ's merits." It is fully distinguished here from all mere fancy or opinion. It can hold only in regard to what is true; it can never be sundered from the actual substance of that which it is called to embrace. The idea of faith in a falsehood, and the idea of faith in no actual union with its object, are alike contradictions, which come in the end to the same thing. Faith carries in its very nature its own warrant and guaranty. It is the "substance and evidence" of the realities it brings into view. Thus related to its object, it is no blind assent of course to mere outward authority. Just as little, however, can it be regarded, as the product of ratiocination. Certain knowledge, as the Catechism has it, even if such a thing could have place on other grounds, engaging us to give full credit to the declarations of the Bible, as we believe the Copernican system, or the facts of common history, would not come up at all to the conception. Our knowledge or conviction, in such view, springing from no apprehension of the things themselves, but based on something out of them and beyond them altogether, would be in fact no knowledge whatever, but a system only of unsubstantial notions and abstractions pretending to the name. It is just as impossible for ratiocination to do what is wanted here, as it is for mere outward authority and blind tradition. It is not by thinking of invisible realities, that they are made to be really present for the soul. This real presence is accomplished by faith, and by faith alone; whose very nature it is to bridge over the chasm which divides the two worlds, and to

bring them into actual substantial union, as the "hypostasis of things hoped for and the demonstration of things not seen;" and which for this very reason must ever go before, and not follow after, all true intelligence in the sphere of religion, according to the deep sense of our motto borrowed from St. Anselm, and through him we may say from St. Augustine: "*Neque enim quero intelligere ut credam, sed credo ut intelligam.*"

Faith stands thus in the same relation to its objects, that holds in the case of sense. It brings the mind into direct communication with them, as actually present and at hand. Such is the apprehension we have of things immediately around us, in the world of nature, by means of our senses. As thus apprehended, they may be made the object of reflection and thought; but such reflection and thought are not themselves this primary apprehension. It goes before all thought, and lies at the ground of it, as that without which it could be of no force or worth whatever. In itself, it turns on no ratiocination, no intermediate bridge of any sort, between itself and the things to which it refers. It is in its own nature, the evidence of these things, the very form we may say, in which their existence is actualized and brought to demonstration. The relation of vision to light, for instance, is such as allows no room to intervene between them, no connecting link to bring them together. It is not in any sense external, but altogether inward. They are different sides only of the same fact, each being what it is wholly by the correspondence in which it stands with the other. Light asserts its character and power by means of vision; that is the form in which it comes to its revelation in the natural world. And so on the other hand, vision takes effect only through the presence of light; this constitutes the very matter or substance, by which it becomes real in the process of actual life. The light is in the eye, and not simply beyond it; the eye, or its capacity of seeing, is itself the power of what is seen, as made in this way to fill with its own immediate presence the mind that sees. It is the organ for light, which can never be exercised without it, and whose exercise then, of course, carries in itself the guaranty that its object is really at hand. In this, natural vision differs from all impressions of mere fancy, however vivid. It can have no place, without real natural light for its contents. The form here can

never be sundered from the substance, it is required to embrace. To talk or think of sight, that sees nothing, is an absurdity.

And now parallel with all this, we say, is the connection that holds between faith and the world of invisible realities, the true home of the spirit, revealed and thrown open by its means. It is the organ by which we perceive and apprehend the spiritual and eternal; the telescope, through which our vision is carried far over the confines of time and sense, into the regions of glory that lie illimitable beyond; the very eye itself rather, that enables us to "look at things unseen," and causes their presence to surround us as a part of our own life. Our nature is formed for such direct communication with the world of spirit; carries in itself an original capacity for transcending the world of sense, in the immediate apprehension of a higher order of existence; and can never be complete without its active development. Sin indeed overwhelms this capacity and prevents its proper use; natural men are said to do violence to the truth by their unrighteousness, (Rom i. 18-20) closing their inward sense as it were, to the revelation of it that surrounds them, and allowing it no room in their minds; but the corruption of our nature in this respect, is not its destruction. The great object of religion, accordingly, is, to restore it to its proper freedom and power, by infusing life into the spiritual sense of which we now speak. Thus called into exercise by the power of the Holy Ghost, faith makes way for the apprehension of divine things at once in their own light. The barrier which had place previously between them and the mind, is made of itself to fall away. They touch it, and make themselves felt by it, on the side of its original capability for such sense of the unseen; just as the things of the natural world touch it also, and are felt, on the side of its corresponding sense for what is outward and seen. As in the case of vision and light, so here also the relation between perception and object, is of the most inward and necessary character. It is the relation which holds between contents and form. Faith is the form in which divine truth comes to its proper revelation among men. As a word in the Bible, merely, or upon the tongue, or in the brain even, it is not made to be truly and fully in the world; only where it is "mixed with faith in them that hear it," only where it finds access to the living soul under this form, can it be said to

be revealed actually in its proper constitution. For truth is life; and it can hold as such only in an element answerable to its own nature. The words that I speak unto you, said our Saviour, (John vi. 63,) they are *spirit* and they are *life*; not letter for the eye only, nor sound for the ear, nor notion for the understanding, but truth whose very form is active power, and the apprehension of which accordingly is not to be imagined under any *other* form. The word lives, and is the word truly, only by faith. And so faith necessarily includes it also as its own proper substance and contents. Faith does not create truth; as little as our natural vision creates light; but without truth for its contents, it can no more be in exercise or existence, than the same natural vision can be where all light is wanting. As sense is developed by the world of sense, and subsists permanently only by union with it as its own substance; so faith is called into exercise only by the presence also of its proper objects, and can have no subsistence apart from them. Faith filled with fiction, is as great a contradiction as sight that sees nothing. It stands just in the apprehension of invisible things, in their own true and proper reality. The direct and immediate communication of our nature with this higher world, in virtue of its original capacity for such purpose, the state or activity in which this communication holds, is itself precisely what we are to understand by faith. It is the form or inward habit of a soul, in actual felt correspondence with things unseen and eternal.

The object of faith then, is always the supernatural; something that transcends nature, and is incapable of being reached in the way of mere sense and understanding. In this respect, it differs materially from common belief, such as we exercise continually in human testimony. This remains bound always to the things of this world. No amount of authority, no simply outward word, can bring into the mind under any such form, a real inward persuasion of the truth of things that belong to a higher world. Let a prophet come, doing miracles in proof of his mission, and then reporting to us invisible heavenly realities; and let us be never so well satisfied with his credentials, still the report, as such, can beget in us no actual faith. It might be fully sufficient to assure us of earthly things; but it cannot assure us in

the same way of heavenly things. These hold in a higher order of life, and can be apprehended accordingly only where the capacity is at hand for perceiving them in this form. The testimony of the prophet must be met with the power of faith on our side, as the true inward sense for the supernatural already in force, in order that it may be truly understood and received. By no possibility can faith in God, or in a divine word, be the consequence and product simply of faith in man, or faith in nature. The apprehension of divine things to be in any case real, must be in virtue of a direct and immediate communication with them, as something above nature and more than nature. This is faith; and in this sense it is, we suppose, that Abraham is made to say in the parable: "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead." Such an outward miracle could generate no faith, as men are apt to think it might. It would be no better for this purpose, we may say, than magic.

Faith looks at things unseen, things that transcend sense; eyes the supernatural; apprehends the divine. Its general object in this view, is the revelation of God; the being, and presence, and glory of God, as they are made manifest for the knowledge of men in his works and word. Such a revelation we have, to a certain extent, in nature itself. "The heavens declare the glory of God," we are told; "the invisible things of him from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead." But all this is no part of nature itself, as it exists for mere sense. The animal sees it not; and brutish men, as the Apostle tells us, "change it into a lie." It is only by faith we are enabled to discern the supernatural in nature, looking through the sacramental symbol and embracing the divine sense, which lies beyond. "Through faith," it is said, Heb. xi. 3, "we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear." Some might think mere natural understanding, reasoning from experience, quite sufficient for this. But the philosophy of the Bible is deeper, and far more sound; the empirical understanding could never bring us to any such result; we come to it, before all ratiocina-

tion, and in spite of it we may say, by faith. We understand *through* faith; not in order to it, but by its means; our creed precedes and underlies our intelligence. So in the case of history. God reveals himself here too gloriously, in the way of his providence. But the revelation is only for faith. "A brutish man knoweth not, neither doth a fool understand this." God reveals himself still more fully in the Bible. 'This is made up of many parts; but the whole may be regarded as one vast act of self-manifestation, by which he unfolds himself more and more for the view of the world, till at last the whole process comes to its consummation in the mystery of the *Word made Flesh*. Throughout, the general nature of faith remains the same. It is still the organ for the invisible and eternal, by which God and his relations to the world are apprehended, in the measure of the revelation actually at hand, at any given time, and under any particular form. It may have less or more range and horizon, but its relation to what this contains, is always the same; it remains throughout the *form*, in which the substance of what God reveals is apprehended; it is the light of the eye towards the higher world of the spirit, without which, emphatically, the whole body, the entire man, must be full of darkness.

Faith then admits of measures and degrees, from the bursting germ to the full corn in the ear. It could not be under the Old Testament, in this respect, what it is required to be under the New; and we have no right to try it in the child by the same standard, that may be applied to it in the case of the full grown man. With the same revelation, there may be very different measures of capacity (strong and weak faith) for its apprehension; and then the capacity must be conditioned objectively, by the amount of the revelation. Only a full revelation can make room for a complete faith. Thus it is, that true christian faith goes beyond all that faith could be under any other form, while at the same time it only completes the nature which belongs to faith universally. How could it be otherwise, if Christ be indeed the last and fullest revelation of God in the world, "the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of his person." The soul of man, brought into felt contact with the presence and truth of the world invisible under such form, must be more

completely open to the light of that world, than it could ever be possibly by any inferior revelation; which is only to say, however, in other words, that it can in no other revelation have the same perfection of faith. Christ is the absolute and ultimate sense of all God's revelations; and so we say of christian faith, that it is the end of all other faith, the only form in which finally our correspondence with the invisible world can be made complete. A fully developed faith, in our circumstances, can have place by the manifestation which God has made of himself in Christ, and in no other way. This is the end, towards which it struggles from the beginning, and without which it must remain forever incomplete. Any true *creed* must be in the end christianity.

Christianity then, is the absolute creed. Its very form primarily is that of faith, in its highest and most perfect power, as called into exercise by the revelation which God has made of himself in his Son Jesus Christ. The revelation can have place only in this way; it could not be made to the senses or to the merely natural understanding; it must hold in the element of faith. It belongs to the conception of the supernatural, as it appeared in Christ, that it should be apprehended, that it should come thus to a real and true *revelation*, by the form of existence we denominate faith, and in no other way. Aside from this form and out of it, christianity might be objectively true in other respects, but it could not have any real existence in the world, it must be for men as though it did not exist at all. To such real existence it comes only and wholly through faith, or the receptivity which makes room for it in the actual order of the world's life. Others *saw* Christ in the days of his flesh, and had their *opinions* about him more or less shrewd; but to Peter it is said: "Blessed art thou Simon Bar-jona; for *flesh and blood* hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven!" The revelation was in the person of Christ himself, not as an outward fact for sense, but as the presence of a divine life for faith.

For christianity, it deserves to be well laid to heart, is in a deep sense identical with the life of Christ itself. It is not the words he spoke, nor the works he wrought, as something sundered from his own person, but the living fountain of all these as introduced

into the world in the mystery from which his person springs. He is the word itself made flesh ; grace and truth enshrined in living *shekinah* ; the life of God disclosed, to the fullest possible extent of revelation, in the very bosom of man's life. Christianity unfolds itself into a whole world of divine realities, (doctrines, promises and deeds,) to the eyes of angels even glorious to behold ; but the inward substance of all this new creation holds continually in the mystery of the incarnation. It is no abstraction, no thing primarily of thought and notion ; but a divine supernatural reality, brought into the world, revealed, made accessible and available for men through faith, and this the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom and in whom only life and immortality are brought to light. All comes to apprehension first, and has its true reality thus, only as Christ himself is apprehended in the spirit and power of Peter's memorable confession ; in virtue of which, as the living appropriation of what it owned and saw, he is proclaimed a *rock* indeed, truly answerable to his own name. Christianity in this way is just as much a *living* reality, as Christ himself ; and being like him above nature, the revelation of God in the world, its presence can be apprehended primarily only in the living form of faith. So apprehended, it may be made the object of reflection and science ; but its whole reality stands first in this apprehension.

So it was regarded by the Church, in the beginning. Independently of all theoretical and practical use to be made of christianity, she knew herself to be in possession of its substance, as something real and constant, in a direct and immediate way. This was seen and understood to fall back on the person of Christ, as its ground. Not on this however, of course, as a mere outward historical fact ; but on the mystery of the incarnation which it involved, and the world of truth and life here opened to the gaze of faith. Christianity in this form, was felt to be immediately and at once at hand, as a divine reality, which men were bound to admit and obey whether they might be able to understand it or not ; just as the world of sense, made real to us by our senses, is to be accepted for what it is in such view, whatever may be required farther for its explanation in the way of science. This immediate substance of christianity, as it comes

to a real revelation in the first place directly for faith, forms the contents, and furnishes us with the true idea, of the ancient Creed. It was never intended to be a theory of religion; it was not exhibited as a formulary imposed by outward authority, nor as the result of any process of reflection. It presented itself to the world simply as a firm affirmation, on the part of the Church, of what christianity was to her living consciousness in the way of direct and immediate fact. It embraces propositions, of course, for the understanding; which, moreover, it is quite possible to accept, and repeat with the lips, in a merely notional way; but the propositions themselves are no product of thought, comparison and deduction; they are the utterance only of what is immediately at hand in the proper christian consciousness itself; and they can be truly understood, only where this consciousness prevails. This is the *form* of the Creed. It has its very being in the element and sphere of faith; and it holds there, in the character of a direct spontaneous witness, with the mouth, to the great central realities of faith as they are immediately felt in the heart.

It is as though one should stand forward, with the full free use of all his senses, in the midst of the world of mere nature, and proclaim his faith in it as a fact actually present in such immediate view: "I believe in the sun, moon and stars, and this solid earth on which I tread; I believe in these towering mountains, and wide extended plains, and gently flowing streams;" &c. We understand at once, without any difficulty, the nature of such a confession. It involves no reflection. It takes the realities of sense, as they are at hand, for the mind in their immediate primary form, and simply affirms their presence accordingly. So here. Faith turned towards Christ, as he stands revealed in his own life, finds itself filled with the sense of a new spiritual world, the proper consciousness of the christian Church; and all this comes to its right expression, under such form, in the solemn language of the Creed. This is christianity, that a man should stand in Christ, in the new world which Christ creates, and say, as in the other case: "*Behold* these heavens and this earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness and everlasting salvation. I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth;

and in Jesus Christ, his only begotten Son, our Lord ; &c." The Creed affirms all this as a glorious reality, present not to sense, but to faith. It offers no problem, no hypothesis, no argument ; but simply plants itself in the midst of the new order of things which is revealed in Christ, and proclaims its fundamental character and outline, with the force of an assurance that is felt to be identical with that of life itself. This, we say, is its constitution and form ; this is its original meaning and force ; to this it seeks to come always in the use of the Church. Its object is, not to lodge its articles as so many points of christian orthodoxy in the mind ; but so to bring this rather into the very consciousness of what they affirm, that they may be appropriated by it, and made one with it, as a part of its own life.

It would be a mistake, however, to conceive of the Creed, as springing in the form now described, at once and in full, from the faith immediately of every single christian, separately considered. It owes its origin to the faith of the Church, as a whole ; and it came to pass as we have seen, not at once, as a thing complete from the beginning, but in the way rather of free gradual progress and growth. These two points now require our consideration.

The Creed, we say, sprang in the beginning, not from the christian faith as something individual and single, but from the faith of the Church as a whole. It is the product of the early christian life, in its general and collective capacity. We shall not stop here to show how it is, that a collective life may originate and produce, in this way, without any outward consultation or reflection, forms of existence, to which no part of it can be considered fully equal when singly and separately taken. The fact itself is abundantly established, on all sides. Our single life is always borne and carried in the bosom of a broader social and public life, whose contents are not simply the arithmetical aggregate of its several parts, but a true spiritual unity rather, which as a single power pervades the whole, and as such, is always something deeper and more comprehensive than any portion of it separately viewed. So in the early life of nations, as it lies back of all history, we meet with creations continually, products of the spirit, that can be resolved into no single activity whatever

and that come by no reflection, but seem to shoot forth spontaneously, by a sort of inward organic force, from the substance of the national mind itself. Language itself is such a production. It comes by no outward gift or command; it springs from no invention or compact; the single life, as such, could never reach it; it grows out of our nature, in its collective or solid capacity. And yet what an amount of intelligence does it not involve, even under the rudest form, far beyond all that may enter into the consciousness of any who speak it, through many generations. How often it happens, that a deep philosophical idea lies hid in the very etymology of a word, which has been made to enshrine it in this way, for the undeveloped popular mind, from the earliest stage of its existence. Think too of the institutions generally, in which society starts, its customs, maxims, and laws; think of the world of wisdom embodied, no one can tell when or how, in the proverbs of a nation, its old saws, its legends, its myths. Are they the fabrication of any single mind, condensing the result of its observations into such artificial shape, and so handing it over to the community for general use? Or have they sprung, perhaps, from a number of minds working together, with common counsel and agreement? Not at all. 'The national life itself, as a collective power, has produced them; making use, of course, of single organs, here and there, to bring them to utterance and expression; but with a depth and wealth of sense, at the same time, which has seldom been clearly present, we may say, even to the consciousness of such individual organs themselves. In no other view, is it possible to do justice to such early creations of the human spirit. They are the spontaneous outbirth of mind itself, in its general or universal character. In some sense, this may be said of every production of true genius. Its proper ground lies back of its immediate authorship, in the power of a far broader and deeper life, (the spirit of the nation, the idea of the age,) which simply lays hold of this for the purpose of bringing itself to expression. Every true work of art is an outbirth, organically, of the general life to which it belongs.

All this may serve to explain what we mean, when we speak of the general life of christianity, in the beginning, as something more than the christian life added to itself in its simply indivi-

dual forms; and when we say that the Creed is to be taken, not as the product of such single christianity separately considered, but as the full free outbirth rather of the christian faith as a whole.

The notorious Dr. Strauss, in his *Leben Jesu*, the most ingenious and complete of all infidel books, has endeavored to account for the whole fact of christianity itself, in this way. The life of Christ, as we have it portrayed in the four gospels, is nothing more, he tells us, than an ideal of the church, the product of its joint imagination, a magnificent myth, or rather a series of myths, (like the labors of Hercules,) made to cluster around the person of the man Jesus of Nazareth, and reduced to shape finally as they now stand, sometime during the second century. This, of course, is a most wild and extravagant hypothesis, which no amount of learning and ingenuity can ever rescue from contempt. The *idea* of Christ is itself something supernatural, and authenticates the reality of his life; and the main use of this work of Strauss, if it can be allowed to have any, is found just in this, that it serves, for a thoughtful mind, to make the mere letter of christianity, even as it stands in the New Testament itself, something secondary to its living substance as exhibited in the actual mystery of Christ and his Church. So much of truth, however, may be allowed to it, that this mystery is actualized, or brought to pass in the world, through the medium of the general christian life as such. It comes to its *revelation*, not to its creation, as a product only of human thought, (the Hegelian dream of Strauss,) but to its revelation as the supernatural in the form of faith, by means of the Church; and this through the activity of the Church, in its collective or universal character, the christian life as a whole. The primitive form of this revelation, is presented to us in the Creed. No man can be said to have composed it; it is no work of bishops or synods; it must be taken rather as the grand epos of christianity itself, the spontaneous poem of its own life, unfolded in fit word and expression from the inmost consciousness of the universal Church. It is the direct image and transcript in word, of what christianity was as a living substance, at once historical and divine, for the faith and by the faith of the early christian world. It is christianity proclaiming

its own immediate presence, as the new creation in Christ Jesus. That presence is the power of a supernatural or heavenly life in the Church; and the primitive necessary form of this is the living christian *Creed*, whose immediate utterance we have in this most ancient and venerable among all church symbols.

It will be seen then, that we are not disturbed in the least by the difficulty some urge against the Creed, on the ground of its outward history, as showing it to be vague und uncertain in its origin. Would it help the authority of what is called the Common Law of England, as we find it handled by Blackstone, if we were able to trace it back to some single source, and could lay our hand on a particular authorship of given place and date, to explain its rise? Who does not see, that as the product of the English mind itself, collectively considered, it must be a much more faithful transcript of the very substance of the nation's life, than it could ever possibly have been under any other form? So in the case before us, that the first christian symbol, the Apostles' Creed, should *not* spring from any particular source or authorship, but come down to us rather as the free spontaneous product of the life of the Church as a whole, the self-adjusted utterance of its faith, we may say, as it was felt to have stood from time immemorial; that no one can show exactly when or how it rose, and took its present shape; that its origin, in one word, is not mathematically definite, but confused and vague, and referable to no fixed time or place; all this, to our mind, is just as it ought to be, and rightly considered invests it with the highest title it could well have to our confidence and respect. It is in this character precisely of its organic relation to the life of christianity as a whole, that its authority may be said primarily and mainly to stand.

And so, of course, we accept also, without any hesitation, the idea of a gradual expansion and enlargement of the Creed, the other point already noticed, as claiming our attention. The outward history of it shows clearly enough that it did not pass at once into the complete form in which it became finally established. It came, not suddenly and at once, but in the way of *growth*. So come all such free creations, whose laboratory is the life of the spirit under a general and not simply individual

form. It lies in a just conception of the true nature of the Creed, that it should come precisely in this way, and in no other.

There are two kinds of growth, or rather two ways in which what is called growth in this case, may be considered as taking place; by outward accretion namely, or accumulation, and by inward development. A stone grows in the first way; a plant, in the second. If the growth of the Creed had been by accumulation simply, one part added to another from time to time, without any inward reason, it might well be taken indeed, as a serious objection to its authority; for it would imply a mechanical production, the worth of which must depend, at every point, on the judgment and skill exercised in adding to it something new; and the process of its formation altogether would be felt to fall over in this way, into the sphere of common human reflection and contrivance. But we have seen already, that this is a false conception of the nature of the Creed. It represents, not a system of thought, but a system of life; and it comes into being along with this, as its direct, immediate revelation or expression in the way of word. It is the free spontaneous externalization of the christian consciousness, the substance of living christianity as a whole, in its primary form of faith. Its growth accordingly corresponds with that of the inward world it represents, the gradual amplification of the christian consciousness itself, or the determination successively of the grand facts it is found necessarily to embrace. This is no growth by mere outward addition or multiplication. It is such rather as belongs always to life, by its very nature; a growth from within; the evolution of hidden contents from a single root or ground, in which all have been comprehended from the beginning. Such growth implies no change, but is the argument rather of unity and sameness; it springs not from deficiency, but shows rather the presence of a complete whole. The Creed was not *made*; not manufactured like a watch; it *grew*, self-produced, we may say, out of the great fact of christianity itself. The early Church was not the artificer that hammered it into shape, part by part, and one article after another; but the organ, through whose life as an actual fact it brought itself to pass. Its contents thus come from within, and not from without. In larger or smaller com-

pass, it remains throughout the same. As uttered by Peter, in his rock-like confession ; as it meets us in the simple baptismal formula ; as "the answer of a good conscience," more or less full, in the apostolical churches ; through all its variations in the second century ; and in the round symmetrical beauty of its last settled form, as accepted formally by the universal Church ; it is still always one and identical with itself, the same fundamental witness and monument of the new creation revealed in Jesus Christ. All its articles gather themselves up at last into a single root, and are throughout but the evolution, more or less full, of what is found involved in this potentially from the beginning. No view of the Creed can be taken as just, no interpretation as sound and complete, in which this inward unity of organization fails to make itself felt.

The very circumstances then, which go with some to invalidate the credit of the Apostles' Creed, in what regards the manner of its origin, we hold to be of special weight in its favor. That it should be so free, as to outward form, and yet so fixed and true to itself always, as to its actual inward substance ; that it should rise into view gradually, now one article, now three, and now twelve, and still show itself a single growth, the development of the same faith throughout ; that it should appear under so many editions and phases, all more or less different in different regions and at different times, and be recognized notwithstanding on all sides as the one invariable *regula fidei* of the whole christian world ; that it should be so loose a deposit apparently in the hands of the Church, from the first century to the fourth, and after all, without negotiation or authority, by the spontaneous voice of universal christendom, assume in the end, the settled form it now carries, as its proper ultimate and constant type ; could there well be, we may ask, a more convincing argument than all this, that the symbol is what it claims to be, a true tradition, not dead but living, of the primitive christian faith, the fundamental consciousness of the Church, the *Creed of the Apostles* ! A very real and fixed substance, most assuredly, the "rule" of christianity must have carried in itself, in the midst of all its flowing freedom, to come at last in such free way to so fixed and solid a result ; and we have no right, accordingly, to

quarrel with the early fathers, Irenæus, Tertullian and others, for appealing to it as they do, under this character, though their very appeal itself may be quoted in proof of the freedom now mentioned. They had no idea of a bound scheme of words, in the case, handed down from the Apostles; but they had a most distinct and strong sense of the actual contents of the christian faith as historically or traditionally carried forward from the apostolical age in the life of the Church; and to this they boldly and confidently appeal, and we may add triumphantly too, in opposition to all heresies, as a sure unity and firm universal fact, which no one could pretend to call in question. It is this *living* character of the ancient *regula fidei* precisely, its self-conserving and self-determining power, which clothes it with its chief title to respect. That such an apostolical rule, as to inward substance, existed and had force, as the unity of the universal christian faith, in the early Church, no one who does not choose to put out his own eyes, can for a moment doubt; and yet it is just as clear that this living rule embodied itself finally, and became permanent and fixed, in the Creed as we now have it. However it may have reached this precise form, the Creed is still, at all events, that old living tradition, nothing more or less, expressing itself in the one sense of the Universal Church. To reject it, is to reject the ancient faith; to make light account of it, is to make light account of the very substance of christianity, as it stood in the beginning. If the *regula fidei* of Irenæus and Tertullian, is to have any reality or be of any force for us whatever, we must own its presence in the Apostles' Creed. We shall have for it most certainly but a figment of our own minds, if we pretend to find it anywhere else.

The true nature and constitution of the Creed, as now explained, may assist us in understanding its material structure, the organization under which its contents are presented to our view; while the right apprehension of this, at the same time, will serve to confirm and enforce still farther the representation of its character already given. It remains then, to consider the architecture, as it may be called, of this ancient creation of the Church, for the purpose of comprehending more completely its plastic reigning spirit and idea.

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THE APOSTLES' CREED.

III. Its Material Structure or Organism.

THE articles of the Creed, in its full form, gather themselves up, in the first place, into three parts; the first treating, as our Catechism has it, of God the Father and our creation; the second of God, the Son, and our redemption; the third of God, the Holy Ghost, and our sanctification. Christianity rests throughout on the mystery of the Ever Blessed Trinity, as revealed for the apprehension of faith through the incarnation of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

In this way, however, the three parts of the Creed now mentioned, fall back ultimately upon a single proposition, affirming the fact of the revelation thus made by Christ. The whole Christian faith, as we have had occasion to say before, finds its primary central utterance in the confession of Peter: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." This accordingly must be taken as the foundation article of the Creed, on which its whole subsequent structure is to be regarded as resting from the beginning. This does not imply, of course, that Christ is in any way the ground or source of the Trinity itself, but only that the being and presence of God under this form come by him to an

actual revelation in the world. He underlies in this way the entire mystery of the new creation, as it is in the process of being brought to pass through the Church; which is said accordingly to be built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone.

This confession of Peter is well suited to exemplify the true conception of the Creed, as it has been already represented and explained. It is no mere opinion, borrowed from others or the product of private reflection, to which utterance is thus solemnly given. It is the conviction of faith, as immediately exercised upon the living person of the Redeemer himself. Others might think him to be Elias, or Jeremias, or some other of the ancient prophets, but Peter *knew* him to be more than all this; the revelation of his higher nature, his immediate union with God, had made itself felt in the inmost soul of the disciple as a part of his own life; and so he was prepared to exclaim in the language, not of speculation, but of lively heart-felt creed, *Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.* That the confession carried in it this high character, we are expressly assured by our Saviour himself. "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona," we hear him saying; "for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven."

The confession utters, in the most immediate and direct way, the fact of Christianity, the new order of life it has brought into the world, as apprehended under its most general character in the person of Christ. The object so apprehended by faith, and thus at once brought to utterance, is no doctrine or report simply concerning Christ, but the glorious reality of the incarnation itself, as exhibited in him under a historical and enduring form. Christianity resolves itself ultimately into this mystery. It has its principle and root in Christ's person. So are we taught most clearly and fully, in the New Testament. The Word reveals itself in him, not by outward oracle or prophecy, but by becoming *flesh*; he is the living comprehension of the truth he proclaims, the actual world of grace itself, which he unfolds and makes known. He is the way, the truth, and the life, by whom alone it is possible for any one else to come to the Father. He is the resurrection and the life; not the proclaimer simply of the

doctrine of a future state and the soul's immortality, but the very ground and medium of the whole fact. The new creation which is, at the same time, the end and completion of the old, starts from the mystery of his person, and holds from first to last in the power of the indissoluble union, thus established between earth and heaven, eternity and time. The incarnation is the deepest and most comprehensive fact, in the economy of the world. Jesus Christ authenticates himself, and all truth and reality besides; or rather all truth and reality are such, only by the relation in which they stand to him, as their great centre and last ground. In him are hid thus all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. He is the absolute revelation of God in the world; the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person. As all this, he is no object primarily of intellection, but can be apprehended only by faith; and in this form, he constitutes the sum and substance of Christianity, as it lives in the consciousness of the Church and finds its expression in the Creed.

It is easy to see here the difference between the contents of faith as actual, and its contents again as simply potential. Peter's christianity, at the time of this confession, fell far short of the sense he had of the new creation in Christ Jesus after the day of Pentecost. It included no apprehension of Christ's sufferings and death, of his resurrection and ascension, or of his glorious mediatorial kingdom. It brought with it no knowledge of the Holy Ghost as he works in the Church, no knowledge of the Church itself, or of its cardinal attributes, no distinct sense of the glorious prerogatives and privileges comprehended in its communion. We have no right to suppose, that the mystery, even of the holy Trinity, or the doctrine of our Saviour's true and proper divinity, as afterwards defined, came clearly into Peter's view, when he uttered his wonderful confession. It would have been hard for him probably, to say, what view he had precisely of Christ's person, or what exactly he expected from his life. He was simply overwhelmed with the felt power of God's presence, as it broke upon him, under a form transcending all other revelations, in the "glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." And yet his faith, in this form

of primitive and undivided simplicity, was, in its own nature, universal and complete. In its apprehension of Christ, as a living reality, it embraced in truth the entire meaning and power of Christ, as set forth afterwards in the full Creed. All its articles were there, though still to a great extent only under a latent or potential form. As the new creation grows forth actually from the mystery of Christ's person, being from first to last the evolution or developement simply of capabilities, relations and powers, that are treasured up in him from the beginning; so the sense of what Christ is as the incarnate Word, when it enters the soul by faith, however circumscribed the horizon of its sight may be at the first, brings with it surely, in the end, by proper culture, all that the full idea of Christianity requires. The mere notion of Christ, or an abstract thought made to stand for him in the Unitarian sense cannot, of course, do this; but it is the very character of faith, as distinguished from all fancy of opinion, that it is called into exercise and determined in the nature of its action, by the supernatural object from which it is filled, as form, with its proper contents. As the *real* apprehension of Christ thus, it can embrace him only as he actually is, from the beginning, and must carry in itself thus an inward necessity of development always under the same form and no other. Of all this we are indirectly assured, by the high honor put on Peter's confession when it was first spoken. This stands not simply in the marvellous and sublime benediction which was pronounced upon his faith, considered as his own, but still more in the proclamation made of its value and power for the future Church. "Thou art *Peter*"—now, indeed, first worthy in full of thine own name—"and on this *rock*," (the living Creed here incorporated with thy life,) "I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."* Narrow as the foundation

* Nothing can well be more miserable in its way, than the shifts which have been resorted to here to wrest this great passage out of the hands of the Romanists. Some turn it into a sort of pun or ambiguous play on Peter's name, in which Christ *pointed* to his own person, as he spake, to show the true sense of his riddle. Others make the doctrine avowed in Peter's confession, to be the rock on which the Church is built. All in full disregard of the context, as well as of the special stirring solemnity of the whole

might seem to some, this single article of the incarnation, "Christ the Son of the living God," really embraced by faith, bears up in the end the entire superstructure of Christianity. All Christian theology, as well as all Christian life, starts here, and flows forward from this as its all comprehending source. Here, as we have seen, the outward history of the Creed commences; and here also we find the power, from which is generated its entire structure, inwardly considered. This article, in the form of *creed*, or as made to be actually present in the life of the world by faith, is, in very truth, the rock, on which rests the Church, and that may be said to support the new heavens and the new earth themselves, through this as "the pillar and ground of the truth."

Out of this primary article grows, in the first place, generally, the faith of the holy *Trinity*; as it comes before us, for instance, in the formula of baptism: "Go teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." So we have it also in the apostolic benediction: "The grace of our Lord Jesus, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all." This threefold view of the divine nature, proceeds from the apprehension of Christ, as the Son of the living God. This does not mean, of course, that the fact of the Trinity commences with the incarnation; the

occasion as presented in the evangelical narrative. It is, indeed, a contradiction, against which all religion revolts, to found the Church, in the Roman sense, on the person of Peter separately considered; but neither can it be said to rest on Christ, or on the thought and confession of his name, in any like outward and separate view. The idea of the *Church* requires the flowing together of our common human existence and the higher life revealed in Christ. So long as they stand apart, the new creation must be without effect in the world. It holds altogether in the mystery, by which, through the capacity of faith on one side and the wonderful power of the Holy Ghost on the other, the fallen weak nature of man is so linked with the very life of Christ, "God manifest in the flesh," as to become one with it in a living way. This fact it is, the passing over of Christ's life into the life of the world, the comprehension of the last in the sense of the first, which forms the soul of Peter's confession; and on this living ground, of a truth, as it was now laid in him and his fellow-apostles, the Church, which binds earth and heaven together, was to be built to the end of time.

filiation of the Son, and the procession of the Holy Ghost, as they hold in the being of God himself, are from eternity. Neither does it mean, however, simply, that the doctrine of the holy Trinity has been published by Christ more clearly than before. We meet with no such outward proclamation, in his ministry and word. Some have objected to the doctrine on this very ground, that being so mysterious, and so fundamental as the Church pretends to her whole constitution, so little stress is laid upon it, in the way of clear categorical statement, in the New Testament. And there must be allowed to be no small force in the objection, if the revelation of christianity be taken, as it often is taken, to stand primarily in the form of word or thought for the understanding. It only shows, however, in truth, that such is not its original and fundamental form. It is not primarily a doctrine spoken by Christ, but a fact comprehended in his person; which as such, accordingly, is to be apprehended and appropriated by the world in the way of creed, before it can enter truly into its intelligence or outward life. Christ then, is neither the creator of the Trinity, nor simply its proclaimer; but the form of its explication in the economy of time, the medium by which it manifests itself for faith, and so for knowledge, in the consciousness of the world. The economical Trinity, as it is sometimes styled, in distinction from its immanent character, the Trinity in its relations to man, as it goes forth from eternity into time, for the accomplishment of our salvation—the only form in which the mystery can be said at all to have for us any *revelation*—comes fully into view only and wholly by Christ. There are indeed, adumbrations of the idea, what may be called a spiritual *nisus* towards it in the depths of the human spirit, in the religion and philosophy even of the heathen world; and still clearer intimations of it are to be found in the revelation of the Old Testament, like streaks of light in advance of the rising day; just as in all respects christianity completes the sense of our universal life, by which, at the same time, thus its advent is gloriously harbingered from the beginning. But still the absolute and proper revelation of the Trinity, is brought to pass at last only in the person of Christ, and by the mystery of the incarnation. So it is expressly affirmed in the New Testament.

He is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person : No man hath seen the Father, the only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath *revealed* him : No man knoweth the Father but the Son, and he to whom the Son shall *reveal* him. God had manifested himself to a certain extent, came forth in some measure from the awful solitude of his own absolute being, in the work of creation, and in the course of history as it stood before Christ came. But all this fell short immeasurably of the self-manifestation which took place in the *act* of the incarnation, when the everlasting Word became flesh, and linked itself into one life with the life of the world itself, as raised to its highest power in man. God came forth in this act, manifested himself, laid himself open in the form of life to the view of faith, as never in all revelations before. Only so was it possible for the mystery of the Trinity to bring itself out clearly in the apprehension of the world ; and in no other form, than as thus apprehended, can the doctrine be of any true value or force. Never was there a greater mistake, than to conceive of it as primarily an abstract theory or speculation. It is the most practical of all truths ; for it lies, in the form of *fact*, at the ground of the whole christian revelation, and is in truth the very form in which this revelation makes itself real, through faith, in the consciousness of the Church. This precisely is the mystery that faith finds in Christ. It lies at the foundation of christianity. To be baptized into Christ, is to be baptized into the holy Trinity. The faith and apprehension of God in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, lie involved from the beginning, in Peter's confession—Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

It is only by this view of the revelation of the Trinity, that we can at all maintain the credit of the doctrine as a part of christianity. Infidels and Unitarians are able easily enough to show, not merely that no pains are taken to affirm it with clear doctrinal precision, (after the fashion of our catechisms,) in the New Testament ; but also that the doctrinal statements of the early Church in regard to it, continue to be for a long time very indefinite and insecure. We do not find the distinction of persons in the Godhead, and their several relations, clearly and fully appre-

hended from the beginning, in the form under which all was afterwards defined and settled. This has often embarrassed those whose conception of christianity requires it to start in the form of doctrine rather than in the form of life. With any right view, however, of its true nature in this respect, the difficulty is made at once to vanish. The Trinity unfolds itself, discloses itself as a fact, only in the historical process of the incarnation, the mystery revealed by Christ's person; and in this way, of course, only as this mystery is made to pass over truly, through faith, into the living constitution of the world, so as to underlie it and take possession of it as the power of a new creation. Thus revealed and apprehended, the entire fact might be in the life of the Church, long before it could be brought to any satisfactory representation in the form of thought. So we have it proclaimed from the start, in the Apostles' Creed. The Trinity is there, not indeed in full theological statement as afterwards settled, but still in the overwhelming sense of its necessary substance, as it looks out upon the world through the glorious fact of the incarnation, and completes its presence in the Church, "the fulness of Him that filleth all in all." The new creation stands throughout in the mystery of the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, historically brought to light by the union of the everlasting Word with our fallen flesh.

The Creed is the utterance of this mystery as it unfolds itself by Christ, in the consciousness of the christian world. All forms a single revelation, which takes effect, however, in the way of magnificent process, starting in the bosom of the Father, and completing itself finally in the full glories of the new earth and new heavens. The end accordingly, grows out of the beginning, and is comprehended in it from the start. The new creation commences with the Father, enters the world through the incarnation of the Son, and runs its course in the world's life subsequently, by the Holy Ghost constantly present and always active in the Church. Such is the order in which the three grand divisions of the Creed come into view; each forming a complete whole within itself, with more or less full utterance of its leading landmark facts; while the entire contents of the second are apprehended, as flowing in the way of derivation from

the first; and then again, as coming to their full issue and last sense, only in the broad sea of glory which is thrown open by the third. In the case of each division, moreover, the characteristic points of fact which it is made to include, whether more or less full, follow each other to a certain extent, in the same way. They are not properly so many items of truth, separately propounded for our reception, as they are notes and characters rather that mark the onward progress of the great universal fact to which they belong, and by which they have place. The Creed rolls thus, like a lofty anthem, with continuous stream of music, rising and swelling throughout on the same key, from its commencement to its close. We may style it a panoramic view of the "pure river of water of life," the moving process of the world's redemption, as it starts from the throne of God and of the Lamb, and flows forward by successive stages, with paradise on its banks, to the region of light and immortality in which finally the Holy Catholic Church shall become forever complete.

All begins in "God the Father, Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth." This is not to be taken, of course, as an article here, of mere natural religion, which may be supposed to go before the revelation of Christianity and to make room for its presence. God does, indeed, reveal himself through nature, as the absolute ground of the universe. But Christianity does not simply take up this fact as thus previously at hand, and then go on to add to it new truths of its own. It goes beyond all previous revelations, and especially all merely natural religion, not only extensively in the amount of what it makes known, but also *intensively* in the depth and power of its apprehension. God in Christ is indeed the God of nature; but with such new self-manifestation of his interior life, as makes him to be, even in this last relation, a wholly different being for our faith, from all he seemed to be before. The revelation of nature is shadowy and superficial, as compared with that which has place in Christ; and it is only by means of this finally, that it comes to its own full significance and sense. Christianity then allows no simply natural religion in its bosom. "When that which is perfect, is come, then that which is in part shall be done away;" the relative, as such, enters not into the composi-

tion of the absolute. So the Creed embraces God, even in his character of Creator, as he has now come to be known, not simply in nature, but in the person of his Son Jesus Christ; "by whom also he made the worlds;" and through whom alone, "in these last days," the full sense of that first creation is fairly brought to light. He is recognized thus, and worshipped, not merely as the author of nature, or as the supreme being, in the cold language of rationalistic deism, but as "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," who is disclosed to the vision of faith, *through him*, as *our* Father also, the fountain and source of the new glorious creation revealed in his person. In this way it is, we are encouraged to approach him in the Lord's Prayer; and in no other view can he be the object of a truly Christian faith. It is through the apprehension of Christ, as the Son of the living God, in the sense of Peter's confession, that the Creed throws us back to this first article as its own everlasting ground and foundation. "He that hath seen ME," our Saviour himself says, "hath *seen the Father*."

In the second section of the Creed, this sublime revelation is represented as going forward, to the actual apprehension of faith, in the historical person of our Blessed Redeemer, Jesus of Nazareth, from the point of his miraculous conception and birth, onward to the completion of his glory finally at the right hand of God in heaven; where he reigns head over all things to the Church, and from whence he shall come at the last day to judge the quick and the dead. "The Life was manifested," says St. John, "and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal Life, which was with the Father, and was manifested to us." The mystery of the incarnation is not strictly a fact, which is to be considered as complete all at once from the point where it commences. In any such view, it would be more magical than real. Our human life does not hold at all under any such stationary character; but is, in its very conception, a fact that accomplishes itself only in the way of historical process and growth. To become human at all then, to enter truly into the stream of man's life, it was indispensable that the Son of God should take humanity upon him, not suddenly and abruptly, but with progressive order, agreeably to the general law of

all existence in time. His life as human, moreover, could not become absolutely complete, so as to display the full sense and meaning of its union with the divine nature, until it was brought, in the way of regular historical progress, to surmount in full the limitations of our present mortal state, thus triumphing over death and him that had the power of death, in the glory of the resurrection. Hence altogether, in the very nature of the case, the stupendous fact of the incarnation, resolves itself into a series or chain of events, a living historical process rather, by which the mystery enters more intimately and deeply always into the drama of the world's life; till finally it becomes complete, and is found to have its perfect work, when "Jesus was glorified," and the windows of heaven were opened thus, (John vii. 39,) for the power of his Spirit to descend in full measure upon the earth. Only under such view, can the faith, which the Creed requires us to exercise in Christ, be considered real and true. Hence the general fact comprised in his person, is drawn out in a succession of historical points, that mark and define its progress from the womb of the Virgin to God's right hand. These, we can see at once, might easily be more or less in number, without affecting the substance of the main article, or the general design with which they are brought forward. As the Creed now stands however, they are wonderfully pertinent and complete; as we shall see presently, when we come to speak more particularly of their significance as articles of faith.

The mystery of the incarnation, as it stands before us in the person of Christ, includes two sides, which must both enter steadily into our faith, to make it complete. We must apprehend, in the first place, the presence of a truly divine life in the fact, the entrance of God into the world as he had not been in it before; in the second place, this life must be admitted under a true human form, and in such relation to the previous constitution of the world, that it shall not violate its order, but be felt rather to fall in with it organically and complete its sense. Thus in Peter's confession, the power of his faith shows itself just in the firm combination of these two views. "The Son of the living God"—a new full manifestation of the divine life—"art thou," the living human Master, whom we follow and serve. This felt

apprehension of the union of the divine and human, the infinite and the historical, in Christ's person, was that precisely which imparted to the faith of the disciple such high value in his Master's eyes.

So the Creed affirms first the full presence of God's life, in the awful fact which is here proclaimed. "I believe in Jesus Christ, his only begotten Son, our Lord." This is to be taken in direct continuation of what goes before; and asserts, in fact, that our faith in God the Father himself is conditioned by the real revelation, under which he is made known to us in Christ; as it is said in one place by the Saviour himself: "This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent" (John xvii. 3); and, again, by the Apostle John: "We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true; and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life" (1 John v. 20). The Creed, in the strongest manner, asserts this identification of Christ with the contents of God's life, so far as this can be an object either of faith or knowledge for men; in full correspondence with what is said in the first chapter of St. John's gospel: The same Word which was in the beginning, which was with God, and which was God, in the fulness of time became flesh, and tabernacled among us, exhibiting his glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth; no man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.

Then follows however, at length, the assertion, no less clear and firm, of the true human and historical character of all this revelation, in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. The Son of the living God, who is here embraced as the object of faith, "was conceived of the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin Mary." So the supernatural in him links itself organically with the existing constitution of the world, and lays the foundation thus within it for a new and higher order of life. The miraculous conception becomes a natural birth, making room and way for the coming of Christ in the flesh. Such a birth implies growth, development, progress in stature and wisdom (Luke ii. 52); and

the life of Christ involves subsequently his full ministry and work. In this way, the Creed might include other dates and facts in his history, such as his baptism, temptation, miracles, &c., and still not suffer any material alteration. It does include all these points in truth, though only in a latent way, and as comprehended in the general fact; while its utterance confines itself to the great and necessary outline simply of the Saviour's history as a whole. In this way, we are carried at once to the close of his life under its earthly form: "He suffered under Pontius Pilate; was crucified, dead, and buried; descended into hell." His existence in the world was human throughout, rounded in as a living process from the womb to the grave. As he came into the world by a real birth, notwithstanding the divine sublimity of his nature as the Son of the living God, so he went forth from it at last by a real death. His was no fantastic manhood only, that played itself off on the eyes of men as true, when it was only a Gnostic shadow, or vision, in fact. He suffered under a Roman magistrate, openly, publicly, and with solemn form, and this passion ran out into a most real and full dissolution of body and soul; it was no sleep or swoon, but death; his body was laid in the grave, while his soul went into hades, the intermediate state. This last clause, as we have seen before, was introduced at a comparatively late period. It was, however, virtually a part of the Creed from the beginning; having no other object at last, than to affirm explicitly, what had been affirmed all along by implication, in the assertion of his death and burial. The descent to hades is indispensable to complete the conception of a full obedience to the law of mortality, comprehended in the problem which Christ came to fulfil. Short of this, his death could not be regarded as a historical fact.

The death of Christ, however, as an object of faith, is far more than the termination simply of a common human life. The person, of whom all this holds, is still the Son of the living God, the everlasting Word in union with our weak mortal flesh. The *reality* of this conception requires then, that the higher nature here at work should not allow itself to be overwhelmed and crushed in the process, but so enter into it, as to assert in the end its own superiority in the way of universal triumph over its

terrific power. The sufferings and death of the Son of God involve thus necessarily, for faith, the idea of a *conflict*, the issue of which is a full victory over death and the grave, as well as over the power of sin from which they come. It was not possible, we are told, that he should be holden of death (Acts ii. 24); that he should sink to rise no more, in the catastrophe, which brought his mortal state to a close. This *impossibility* is perceived and felt by faith, even while it acknowledges his passion; the sufferings of the Son of God are proclaimed, as the very form in which he destroyed death, and him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and thus brought in righteousness and immortality for all that believe in his name. So it follows immediately: "The third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God, the Father, Almighty." All in continuation simply of the living process, on which he entered at his birth. The true universal significance of his life, as including in itself a deeper power than the law of mortality he came to abolish, now comes into view. The nature he had assumed, is made to surmount the limitations of its first state, and rises triumphant to the skies. Hades is shorn of its strength, the grave resigns its prey; he that descended into the lower parts of the earth (Eph. iv. 9, 10), is the *same* that is seen to ascend up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things. The old order of the world, in his case, is brought to an end; he leads captivity captive; man, in his person, finds himself exalted finally to his proper supremacy over the whole inferior creation. All things are placed under his dominion, and he is head over all things, to the Church. In this character, he must reign till all enemies are put under his feet, and the whole world subdued into harmony with the order of the new creation. His mediatorial government extends, by the very nature of the case, from the hour of his exaltation onward to the end of time; and finds its necessary conclusion in the general judgment. So all is comprehended here again, as in the case of our Saviour's first state, within the extremes that bound the entire stadium on either side; and, with a single stroke, we have this part of the Creed complete: "From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead."

In all this representation of the Saviour's personal history, the outline of his life as it reaches from his introduction into the world on to the winding up of his mediatorial reign, we have, after all, it must be borne in mind, the evolution simply of the one single fact in which Christianity begins, as proclaimed in Peter's confession: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." The several specifications employed to set it forth, are not to be taken as so many independent propositions, asserted on separate evidence, and brought together in the way of collective sum; they might be more, or they might be less; but in any case they are to be taken as bound together in the constitution of one and the same great object of faith, out of which, in the end flows all their title to a place in the Creed. For instance, it would be a mistake to suppose that the miraculous conception, or the descent to hades, or the resurrection and ascension into heaven, are exhibited as articles of christian belief, which we may be expected to receive in the first place on their own proofs separately considered, and then lay away under this form in the general repository of our faith; as though the Creed were the accumulation merely of such theological conclusions and results. The only *ground* of all Christian faith, we have seen already, to be the person of the Lord Jesus Christ himself. To suppose now, however, that the miraculous conception, or the resurrection, might be made certain by themselves, in the first place, on proofs lying wholly out of Christ, is to contradict this conception in full. There is no such contradiction in the Creed. Every topic affirmed here of Christ's history, is an article of *faith* in the high christian sense; a reality that belongs not to the world of nature and sense as such, but to the new creation, in which heaven and earth are brought supernaturally together by the mystery of the incarnation; no outward witnesses and no common human reasons, impart to it its ultimate credibility; this lies in the relation in which it is felt to stand to the fact of the Saviour's person itself. The grand argument after all, for the great distinctive *memorabilia* of Christ's theanthropic life, and that without which no evidence besides could make them certain, is comprehended in his own presence. The first condition of all knowledge here, is an entrance, by faith, into the central fact of the Gospel, as

we have it presented to us in the living and moving form of the Divine Word itself, incarnate for us men, and our salvation, in the Virgin's Son. Not as we stand on the threshold merely of this sublime and magnificent temple, but only as we pass into the awful bosom of the sanctuary itself, may we ever expect to apprehend as they are the forms and proportions of its true interior structure. Only in proportion as my faith is first overwhelmed with the sense of Christ's real divine majesty, as the Son of the living God made flesh, can I be brought to admit with firm faith, on any evidence, the astounding mystery of his birth, or the no less astounding mystery of his resurrection. The whole lies *beyond* nature, in the sphere of a new order of life which is revealed in Christ and nowhere else; how then should it be apprehensible at all, or creditable, under any other form of observation? But, on the other hand, let the sense of Christ's majesty so overwhelm the mind, in the first place, and these mysteries, astounding as they are, can no longer be repelled; they are felt to be indispensable to the conception of his person. *Such* a person could not come into the world by the ordinary course of nature; and equal violence is involved in the imagination of his yielding finally, like other men, to the power of the grave. The man Christ, as he stands before us there through the medium of Peter's faith, is felt to be a fact that transcends the whole course of nature, even while it discloses itself historically in its bosom; it is the presence and power of a higher supernatural order of existence in union with nature, which cannot, as such, be included and bound within its economy as it stood before, either first or last. Faith in Christ, as the revelation of a divine life in the world, cannot stand at all in connection with the supposition, either of his being born, or of his remaining in the grave, like other men. In any such view, it would cease to be this faith altogether, and the Christ of the Creed would no longer exist, except as a phantom for the imagination.

Thus it is that all the points of this historical confession, however some of them might seem to be accessible to our knowledge at least, to some extent in a different way, yet in the true force and spirit of the Creed, are to be taken as supernatural truths, which can be rightly apprehended and uttered only by faith in

full communication throughout with the grand primary fact to which they belong and from which they spring. Even the passion of the Saviour, his sufferings under Pontius Pilate, his bloody death and burial, are vastly more in this case than topics of natural intelligence; the apprehension of them, as entering into the life of Christ, the Son of the living God, lifts them at once into the supernatural sphere in which that life holds; and it requires accordingly the same sort of faith to say, "*Christ died,*" which we need to add immediately, "*and rose again.*" The fact of the resurrection witnessed by *sense*, that is as a mere phenomenon in the world of nature, would not be its truth as asserted in the Creed; just as little as the sight and acknowledgment of Christ's miracles, in the days of his flesh, amounted, with the Scribes and Pharisees, to any true apprehension of his divine glory. The idea of Christ is not of itself his history; but it is only through the power of it, as actually at hand, for faith, that his history becomes intelligible and enters also into our creed under a corresponding mode of existence.

The great fact of the Creed, the revelation of the Ever Blessed Trinity in the mystery of redemption, completes itself finally in the Holy Ghost, through whose presence in the world the saving power of Christ's life is carried over to his people. A new region of glory is thus thrown open to the vision of faith, including as before, a flowing process, whose commencement is here joined at once with its magnificent end. The whole however, as already intimated, is but a continuation of the one stupendous mystery that goes before. Our faith in the Holy Ghost is not drawn from some other quarter, and then made to range itself as a separate and independent belief, along with our faith in the Incarnation; it grows forth from this as its necessary and only sufficient ground; it can have no value, no reality in truth, save as it is made to enter our minds in this way. So too our faith in Christ completes itself legitimately only in the faith of the Holy Ghost. A true christology, involving, as it must, a living sense of the true universal import of Christ's life, carries in itself a demand for the extension of its power, in some way, over to the race he came to redeem. The river of life which first opens upon our view in his person, must flow over these banks in the end, and become

a sea of glory, filling the whole world. This can be accomplished only through the living activity of the Holy Ghost; whose proper personality and work, accordingly, faith is thus brought to apprehend, as the necessary complement, we may say, of what it has previously apprehended as the presence of God in Christ. We read of God's Spirit as present with a certain kind of action in the world, before Christ came; but it will not do to take this as identical at all with the form of his presence in the world since. We are plainly told, that the Spirit as he now works in the Church, could not be given till Christ was glorified; the mystery of the incarnation must complete its course in his person, before room could be made for the farther revelation of its power in the other form. This accordingly was the great promise for which his disciples were directed to wait, when he left the world; the fulfilment of which too, as we all know, took place on the day of Pentecost, and laid the foundations of the Christian Church. The article, "I believe in the Holy Ghost," has regard altogether to this revelation, the entrance of God's Spirit into the process of the world's life as the Spirit of Jesus Christ, under such form of existence and action as had no place before, and was first rendered possible only by the new creation brought to pass in his person. To accept the doctrine of the Holy Ghost as true on *other* grounds, and under a simply abstract form, can not satisfy at all the sense of the Apostles' Creed. The only faith in the Holy Ghost it knows, is that which is conditioned by faith in the sublime Christology that goes before, and which grows out of this as its cause and ground.

Forth from this divine spring-head now rolls, in conclusion, the full tide of Christianity, as it is found still pouring itself forward, age after age, in the Church. The topics or heads that follow, stand related again to the primary article, much as we have found the several clauses in regard to Christ to be related to the general article of the incarnation. They serve simply to draw out and define graphically the contents of our faith in the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost is apprehended in the Creed, not as an abstraction or thought merely, but as a fact actually revealing itself in the world; and the form of this revelation expresses itself comprehensively in the "Holy Catholic Church," where

the new creation is exhibited in grand outline, as "the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting."

The article of the Church, then, of course, is not made co-ordinate in any way with the articles of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. We are not to believe *in* the Church, as we are required to believe in God; we believe it simply, as we believe the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting; it is something sure to us, as the form under which the Holy Ghost is apprehended, as historically present and active in the world. So the world itself may be an object of faith, (Heb. xi. 3,) when the revelation of God in it is truly seen and felt. It must be always kept in mind, however, that this involves far more than the knowledge of it by mere sense. The world does not properly beget our faith in God; but it is this faith, rather, which enables us to believe the world, as the true sacrament of his presence. And so the Church also, the new creation in Christ Jesus, notwithstanding the subordinate character now assigned to it, is still altogether an object, not of sense and natural knowledge, but of faith. However accessible it may be under certain aspects to mere outward observation, its actual reality and substance, as affirmed in the Creed, are ever to be acknowledged as something divine, of which no proper assurance can be had in any such outward way. The entire Creed has to do with realities that hold in a world above nature, (though not abstractly disjoined from it,) and that can be apprehended, accordingly, as they are, only by faith. To believe the Church, then, is something far more than to believe the presence of some certain, tangible and visible organization in the world, like the British Parliament, for instance, of which we can take the measure and gauge by direct outward inspection. Such palpability in the case of the Church, even if it were fully at hand, would not of itself bring with it what this article requires; just as little as the *sight* of Christ after his resurrection, might be taken as equivalent to the sense of it by faith. The invisible and supernatural here, as throughout the Creed, must be apprehended as going before the outward, underlying it, and filling it with its true and necessary sense. We rise not from the region of sense here, into the region of spirit; but from the region of

spirit itself, rather, as we have come to be in it already by the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, we descend into the region of sense and actual life ; and by virtue of the same assurance with which we say : *Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God*, are enabled and urged at the same time to exclaim : *We believe in the Holy Catholic Church*. The revelation of grace and truth which starts in the mystery of the incarnation, the great christological fact here disclosed to the view of faith, runs forward, of itself, into the mystery of the Church. We need no outward precepts and texts here to prop up our belief and make it rational ; on this *rock*, the Church is built as a living necessary fact ; and if it have no reality for our faith in such form, it is in vain to expect that it can ever be made an object of faith to us truly in any other way.

Thus apprehended in its ideal constitution, as the necessary outbirth of Christ's Mediatorial life, the Church waits for no definition from abroad, but proceeds at once to define itself, in the Creed, as One, Holy, and Catholic ; which at once includes also the title Apostolical, as afterwards frequently introduced. These attributes come not from without, hang not at all on men's invention or consent, rest not primarily on any basis of empirical observation or induction. They are the necessary conditions of the *idea*, which is here laid hold of by faith, as something given and made sure through the mystery of Christianity itself. It will not do to cut and square this, with arbitrary violence, into our own shape ; we must take it as it stands, and interpret it accordingly. To say that facts forbid such a construction of the Church, is only to say in other words, that the idea of Christianity presented in the Creed is a fiction, and along with this that its view of Christ's person is false ; for the one conception flows with inward necessary deduction from the other. From the stand-point of the Creed, the attributes of the Church are just as fixed and certain, in its own sense, as the being which is felt to belong to it as the Body of Christ. It is this relation precisely in which it stands to his person, that fixes and settles its character in all the respects here under consideration. If it be in very truth the comprehension of a new and higher order of life for the world, the fountain of which is the Redeemer himself, it

must require in its own nature unity, sanctity and catholicity. It must be such a positive whole, as owns nothing beyond itself, and can allow no schism within itself. As it is the most perfect form of human life, so it must claim authority also as the most universal. It must be apostolical too, or in other words strictly *historical*, a real continuously active constitution from the time of the Apostles on to the end of the world. All this is implied, for faith, in the lively sense of what is comprehended in Christ's person; as all skepticism or indifference, on the other hand, in regard to these necessary attributes of the Church, is a worm which may be said to lie at last very near to the core of Christianity itself.

The mystical supernatural character of the Church, as now described, is expressed in one word as the "communion of saints." The Creed means not by this, of course, to resolve it into the ordinary fellowship of kindred minds. The object is rather to lift the conception distinctly into a higher sphere. Nothing can be more real than this new order of existence, though the law which underlies it, and the bond that holds it together, be "not of this world" in the ordinary view. Its common universal character is membership in Christ, who is the one everlasting foundation of a life, more real, and deep, and solid, and enduring, than all that belongs to the world besides. To believe the *communion of saints*, as such a supernatural constitution in Christ, historically present in the world, binding all ages of the Church together as a single whole, reaching over into the intermediate state, and destined to break forth at last into the full triumph of the resurrection, amid the glories of the new heavens and the new earth, may well be counted something high and great, and worthy of the place it holds in the Creed. "*Fools* never raise their thoughts so high;" mere flesh and blood can bring us truly to no such revelation.

Within this mystery now of the new creation, is comprehended the process by which individual souls, from age to age, are gathered from ruin and made meet for eternal glory. To a vast deal of our modern thinking, the order observed here by the Creed must appear careless, at least, and ill-advised. It would be led far more naturally to say: I believe in repentance and conversion, then in the communion of saints, and finally, in some sort

of holy catholic church; putting the individual isolated christianity, in order of thought, before that which is general and collective. The early Church, however, had a different way of looking at the matter; and the difference is here very plainly graven upon rock, in this old monumental symbol. The Church is taken to be the Holy Mother, from whose womb, as Calvin has it, we must all be born, and on whose breasts we must all hang, in order that we may grow up unto everlasting life. The general, objective, universal side of Christianity, starting as it does in Christ, although it can never be sundered from individual religion in the Church, must not be viewed simply as the product and consequence of this, but is to be apprehended always by faith rather as the power that truly underlies and supports all its worth. The process of our salvation lies, not beyond the Church and out of it, but directly in its bosom. We have it measured here by its extreme ends, with all intermediate forms of experience quietly included, of course, as parts of one and the same historical fact. This starts in the "remission of sins," and becomes complete finally, with the completion of the Church as a whole, in the "resurrection of the body." The first clause is no doubt one in sense substantially, with the Nicene article, "one *baptism* for the remission of sins." No one at all familiar with the life of the early Church, or in any way at home in the true genius of the Creed, can hesitate at all or feel much embarrassed, in regard to this point. The religion of the Creed is, throughout, sacramental and churchly, in the right sense of these terms. We may, if we choose, force into it a different meaning, to suit our own different taste; but the meaning of the period from which it springs, is abundantly clear, and we are bound to respect it, at least so far as history is concerned. The Church is here made an object of faith; a new divine economy is regarded as permanently at hand in her constitution; she is the mystical mother of saints; her sacraments convey grace, where the way is open for its reception; the remission of sins, in order to a christian life, comes under God from her hand (Matth. xvi. 19, xviii. 18.); and the act by which the grace is sealed is holy baptism, which it is the duty and privilege of all, accordingly, to embrace with full faith, as carrying in it this divine force. All this was liable to be greatly abused, and, as we very well know, was so

abused in fact. But still, rightly understood, it expresses deep and sacred truth; the force of which *we* also must acknowledge and feel, if we would not forfeit all lot and part in the Creed of the ancient Church.

The whole winds up with "the life everlasting;" which is simply the triumphant issue of the christian process, as it is to reach its conclusion finally in the resurrection. To some, the doctrine of everlasting life appears to carry with it an independent certainty, on other grounds; so far at least as the "immortality of the soul" is concerned, it is felt to be comparatively easy to accept the idea of a future state, on what are supposed to be the merely rational evidences of its reality. But the Creed knows nothing of any such abstract immortality. Its life everlasting is conditioned absolutely, by the resurrection of the body; it stands in the recovery of the man as a whole unity, from the law of sin and death which lies upon him in his present state; and all becomes real, only as a fact comprehended in the new creation which is brought to pass in Jesus Christ. Such plainly too is the view taken of it in the New Testament. The *immortality of the soul*, as it is called, in the common sense of the doctrine, is not taught in the Bible; on the contrary, it is heathenish, and tends to subvert the fundamental idea of Christianity. Life and immortality in the New Testament sense, are "brought to light" by Jesus Christ, as the result of his own mysterious union with our fallen nature, and in this form embrace at once body and soul together. To be in Him, is to have everlasting life, with the certainty of being raised up in virtue of it at the last day. He is the Resurrection and the Life. Thus it is that this article of the Creed as well as all the rest, is an object strictly and truly of *faith*; and this the same faith at last by which we assent to the mystery of Christ's person. To hold it on other grounds is not enough; we *believe* it truly, only when we embrace it as a fact which is felt to have its foundation and necessity in this living revelation, and in this alone.

Practical Reflections.

Such we conceive to be the general scheme and structure of the Creed. It is no such fragmentary, disjointed production, as

it is often imagined to be, by those who have little or no sympathy with its true sense and spirit. Take it as it is in its own constitution; let it be apprehended and estimated, not as a work of outward theological reflection, but as a transcript of what may be styled the intuitional consciousness of christianity itself in its original fundamental form; let the true conception of christianity be at hand as a new life, and not simply a new theory, springing from Christ, and along with this the true conception also of faith as the very power by which it is substantiated and made to be present in the world; and it will be no longer difficult for any one to feel the divine force of the symbol, the grandeur of its idea, the unity and harmony and complete wholeness of its architectural design. It is in all respects single, rotund and full, within the compass of its own orb. It is a majestic tree that grows forth from a single root. It is a grand oratorio of the Messiah, and of the Creation, in which the full harmony of heaven pours itself along, like the sound of many waters, from beginning to end. It is a vast Gothic dome, whose massive symmetry, poised upon a single centre, seems to swim with ærial lightness in a world of its own, piercing at last the very heavens. No work of art could well be more finished and complete. Each part becomes intelligible, nay, as an object of *faith*, becomes real, we may say, only by its inward organic union with the whole; while this, on the other hand, includes and requires all the parts, from the beginning, as essential to its own constitution. Some have thought, that it would be an easy thing to *improve* the Creed, by throwing out some parts of it and adding to it various doctrinal propositions which are now wanting. There is reason to suspect, indeed, as already intimated, that with no small portion of our modern Protestantism, the task would be felt comparatively light, to construct a much better new Creed altogether. All such thinking, however, turns of course, on a radically defective sense of its true nature and design, and betrays besides a most unsafe apprehension of christianity itself; the very last that can deserve to be trusted, with all its imaginary orthodoxy, for the manufacture of any religious creed or confession whatever. The Creed, in its right conception, can admit no such improvement or alteration. There is no room to speak of different creeds as we may speak,

for instance, of different catechisms or church covenants; as though the fact of Christianity might be cast into several totally diverse schemes of thought, and yet remain true to itself in this character. 'To be truly a *Creed* at all, it must be the very movement of the fact itself, as disclosed to the vision of faith. It must be one thus, and not many. There is room, as we have seen, for variations in the filling up of the outline or scheme. This may be more or less full. But there is no room for different outlines or schemes. The *Creed*, in this respect, is as much one as Christianity itself is one. It determines its own contents, and it determines also its own form. It literally makes itself, and it will allow no man to turn it into any other shape. Whatever else our Christianity may include, in the way of doctrine or practice, it must start under the form here proclaimed, if it is to be at all legitimate and worthy of trust. This, at all events, is Christianity in its most universal character, the glorious fact of the new creation by Christ Jesus, under its broadest and most comprehensive features. Under such view, it is admirably complete; and it must be the wildest extravagance ever to dream of improving it by taking from it, or adding to it, or re-forging it into any new shape.

We close with the following reflections, flowing more or less directly, in the way of corollary or suggestion, from the whole subject:

I. The *Creed* does not spring from the Bible. This is plain from its history. Its main substance was in use before the New Testament was formed. Peter's confession, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," had no such origin. It was produced from the living sense of Christ's presence itself. And so, we may say, the whole *Creed* which lies involved in that confession, is derived through faith out of the same living ground. It is, of course, in harmony with the Bible; for it has to do immediately with its central revelation, the mystery of the Word made Flesh. It comes not, however, circuitously, in the way of reflection and study, through its pages. The early Church got it not from the Bible, but from the fact of Christianity itself, which must be allowed to be in its own nature older even and deeper than its own record under this form. Strange that there should be any

confusion in regard to what is in itself so palpable and clear. The Bible is not the *principle* of Christianity; nor yet the *rock* on which the Church is built. It never claims this character, and it can be no better than idolatry and superstition to worship it in any such view; as much so as though the same worship were directed towards a crucifix or the Roman mass. The one only principle of Christianity, the true and proper fountain of its being, is the person of Christ; not any written account or notion of his person, but the actual living revelation of it, as a fact in the history of the world. The Church rests immediately on this foundation, and no other. The Bible is of force, only as it proclaims this revelation. In such view, it is of indispensable account for the preservation and advancement of the christian life; it is the divinely constituted rule, by which, through all ages, it must be measured and led. But still it is not this life itself; its relation to it is, after all, that of a condition, rather than that of a ground; and we are bound to see in Christianity always the presence of the Word under another form, as the true substratum at last of all its glorious power in the world. It is a Fact, independently of the Bible and before it, which, as such, has a right to challenge our faith, whether we can show the Bible to be inspired or not. Indeed our ability to show the Bible inspired, must ever turn on our ability to prove in the first place, the reality of the revelation. So in all our systems of divinity, we begin, not with the inspiration of the sacred volume, as though this could be established in any wholly *ab extra* way, but with the truth of Christianity itself; feeling well assured that without this, it must be worse than idle to think of bringing the other question to any satisfactory issue. But what is this else than an acknowledgement that the Bible is not the principle of Christianity, but that this has its being in the world under another form, which is no less divine than the Scriptures themselves. Christianity is not only a written word, but a new creation in the form of life, starting from its founder Jesus Christ. In this last view, it *must* have, if it be what it claims to be, a real historical substance, which we are bound to respect as divine, no less than the Bible itself. There is not merely room thus, but an absolute necessity, for what may be styled a true christian *tradition* in the Church;

not as something against the Bible or foreign from it; but still not as a mere derivation either or efflux simply from its pages; a tradition which starts from the original substance of Christianity itself, as it underlies the Bible, and which in such form becomes the living stream into which continuously the sense of the Bible is poured, through the Holy Ghost, from age to age, onward to the end of the world. This divine tradition meets us under its clearest, most primitive and most authoritative character, in the Apostles' Creed.

II. The idea of the Creed, as now given, throws light on the true character of the Church, as related to Christ in one direction and to the Bible in another. The Creed represents the primary substance of Christianity, as it has passed over from Christ in the form of life, into the general consciousness of his people. This general life is the Church. It is of course, a divine fact in the world, and so of right an article of faith more immediately than the Bible itself. First the Church, and then the Bible. So in the Creed: "I believe in the Holy Catholic Church," instead of: "I believe in the Holy Inspired Bible;" not certainly to put any dishonor on this last; but to lay rather a solid foundation for its dignity and authority in the other article; for, after all, it is the Church, next to Christ, and not the Bible, save as comprehended in the Church, which according to St. Paul, is "the pillar and ground of the truth." Is this to throw Christ into the shade, as the opposers of the Church sometimes pretend? Just as little, we reply, as faith in the divine authority of the Bible tends to throw him into the shade. The Church *may* be so magnified as to wrong Christ; but it is just as possible, and at this time also, just as common, to magnify the Bible in a like bad way, at Christ's expense; as where men, for instance, insist on sundering it from the objective fact of Christianity itself, the life of Christ in the Church, and force it to become instead the vehicle only of their own private judgment and proud self-will. Neither the Church, however, nor the Bible, can be held responsible for any such abuse. In their own nature, they do homage perpetually to Christ. The Church is but the living revelation of his presence and power, from age to age, in the world. The Bible is his written word. In this view, both are required to go

together. Christianity is the proper union of both. Neither can fulfil its mission, apart from the other. The Church, to be true to her vocation, must be ruled by the Bible; if any pretend to follow her voice, without regard to this, they will be led astray. But the converse of this is no less certain. The Bible to be a true word of Christ, must be ruled by the life of the Church; if any pretend to follow it without regard to this, they too will most assuredly miss the truth. Will it be said that this is a circle? Be it so. In such circle precisely, is it the divine prerogative of faith, at all times firmly and serenely to move.

III. Christianity, as such a divine fact in the consciousness of the Church, is historical. The idea of history is opposed both to dead tradition and to dead change. It moves; it lives; it grows. So the Creed originally came to pass. In its very conception thus, it makes room for a continuous historical evolution of the christian life on all sides. To take it as the end of all Christianity, is to mistake its nature entirely. It is only the form in which it begins. Christianity must be far more than such beginning. Its mission is, not merely to cover the earth with its outward presence, but to occupy and rule inwardly also the universal being of man. It must regenerate the thinking of the world and all its action; it carries in itself, accordingly, the possibility of becoming such a reconstruction or intensification of our universal life, from the start. The substance then which it exhibits primitively in the Creed, is by no means bound to that, either as a rigid shell or loose drapery; but widens itself continually, in the way of historical concrete growth, and unfolds its inward wealth in forms as manifold as the complex fact of humanity itself. So in particular it admits and requires a progressive theology; for why should not Christianity occupy our nature in the form of science, as well as in the form of action or feeling? Theology implies doctrines. These come, for the understanding, by gradual process. Hence each single doctrine has its history, and theology is historical as a whole. The history in this case is not something outward only, but enters into the very substance of the christian fact itself; so that in any right view of the case, it is just as necessary for theology to be historical, as it is for it to be biblical. History is one of the factors, by

which it is brought to pass and made to have in itself a real existence. True faith in the Creed then, does not require us to renounce all interest in theology, and fall back on the primary christian consciousness as the *ne plus ultra* of the new creation; on the contrary, it is just what we need to overthrow the idea of all such stability, and fit us for the right appreciation of theology as a continuously progressive science. To have faith in the Church, is to have faith at the same time in History. The spirit of the Creed is not radical. It is the spirit of Sect, ever violent and abrupt by its very constitution, that seeks to nullify the whole christian process since the days of the Apostles. To a mind in sympathy with the Creed, that process is ever something sacred and divine, no less, we may say, than the primitive faith itself.

IV. With such historical character, all true theology, at the same time, grows forth from the Creed, and so remains bound to it perpetually as its necessary radix or root. History is not progress in the way of outward local remove from one point to another, but progress that carries the sense with which it is freighted onward and upwards always into new forms. It resembles the growth of a tree or the gradual evolution of our individual human life. It is a river, which carries itself forward with its own flow, ever changing and yet ever the same. The relation of the Creed then to the forms of sound christian doctrine which have since appeared, is simply this, that they are to be regarded as lying silently involved in it from the beginning, though some time was needed to bring them to clear and distinct utterance. The great articles of christian theology come from the Bible; but, at the same time, they are *mediated* or brought to pass for the mind of the Church, only through the presence and power of the primitive christian consciousness, (expressed in the Creed,) as something already at hand. It is no defect in the Creed, that it contains not several most important and necessary articles of a sound theology as the Church now stands, the inspiration of the Scriptures, for instance, or the doctrine of justification by faith. On the other hand, however, such articles lose no credit or authority whatever, by the fact of such omission. The only question is, do they flow from the substance of Christianity as given in the Creed, and do they hold in it and from it perpetually as

their vital root. This, after all, is complete, under its own form, as an utterance of the primary *fact* of Christianity; and it only follows that other articles have their truth and importance, not in the same primary way, but all the more surely, for this very reason, in the way of derivation and outflow from what goes before. We reach thus this great practical conclusion, that the orthodoxy of every doctrine is fairly tested at last by its inward correspondence or want of correspondence with the Creed. It is not enough that it seem to be biblical from some other stand point; its biblicality must be evident, as seen *through* the fundamental substance of Christianity embodied in this universal faith of the Holy Catholic Church. It is not enough that a doctrine be sound in form; if it refuse notwithstanding to coalesce inwardly with the spirit of the Creed, it convicts itself of substantial falsehood. Take in illustration, the article of justification by faith, Luther's criterion of a standing or falling Church. It is not sufficient, surely, that it be accepted in a merely general and abstract way. Our sects, United Brethren, Albright Brethren, Winebrennerians, and a score of others to the same general tune, readily meet for the most part, on this ground; one trying to outdo another, in its zeal for this particular side of religion. And yet Luther would have denounced the whole of them, as a worse plague than the locusts of Pharaoh. Do we ask, why? With Luther, the article had firm and fast root in the Creed, the historical substance of the old catholic christian life; whereas, with these upstart sects, it is a mere abstraction or fancy, which makes no account of the old catholic faith whatever, and so proves itself to be the growth of some other soil, the product simply of the human brain. These sects have no sympathy with the Creed; they do not stand in it with their inward life; their theology starts not out of it at all, as its primitive ground. Thus held, the article of justification by faith ceases to be true, and is no longer safe, but full of peril for all the interests of religion. So would all the Reformers say, with one voice.*

* *Professor Tayler Lewis*, of the New York University, in his manly and truly able review of the Mercersburg School, as he calls it, published in Nos. 114 and 115, of the *Literary World*, expresses some apprehension of

V. Regard for the Creed then, may be taken as a fair measure of sound church character, as distinguished from the spirit of sect and schism. In its whole conception and life, the Creed is catholic, inwardly bound to the true universal power of the Christian life, as it stood in the beginning. Hence it will be found invariably, that the sect spirit, whose essential nature it is to be abrupt, violent, unhistorical and upstart, leads, if not openly, at least quietly, always, to the abandonment of the venerable symbol altogether. Sect piety has no relish for the Creed; it cannot utter itself naturally in any such way; it makes no account, in truth of Christianity in that form. The genius of Puritanism, as we have already seen, is also strikingly at variance with the same rule. The fact admits no doubt. It stares upon us in the almost universal neglect into which the Creed has fallen, wherever Puritanism prevails. It will not do to say, that this neglect is more apparent than real, and that the substance of the Creed is still in honor, though not its particular form. The difficulty is, precisely, that the form is such as will not easily allow another substance to be put into it, than that which belongs to it in truth; on which account, the use of it is felt to be uncongenial with the

the danger there is of wronging the forensic side of our salvation, in trying to make too much of Christ as the bearer of life for us in a real way. He allows both, but seems to think that the first interest forms for our faith the safety of the second. "The incarnation and the crucifixion," he remarks, "are the fundamentals of our faith. It may be admitted too, that the first is the necessary ground of the value of the second; but all ecclesiastical experience has shown, that for us, and to us, in our unrecovered state, the latter is the nearest truth, that it has the most of moral power, and that when vividly sustained, it has ever sustained the belief in the coördinate mystery." This we cannot admit. The forensic interest is full as liable to run wild, as the other. So we see in the case of our unsacramental sects, on all sides. The true order is, the mystery of the incarnation first, and then the atonement, as growing forth from this, and *only in such view*. Such is the conception of the Creed. Peter's confession is the rock that must underlie, in our minds, all other divinity. Protestantism can be of true and genuine growth, only as it grows forth from *catholicity*, the primitive substance of christianity as a fact, made to break on the sense of the soul through the apprehension of Christ's person. A sound *christology*, involving always the idea of a sound church life, is indispensable, we more and more believe, to all true orthodoxy at other points.

true life of Puritanism, as something which is, in fact, not inwardly harmonious with the life of the ancient Church. Hence such use in this case can never be easy, natural and free, but produces always some sense of awkward and stiff constraint. Puritanism must wrest the Creed into quite a different sense from its own original meaning, to be able at all to acquiesce in its several articles. Left to itself, it would fall on a very different scheme of fundamental and necessary truth. It can see no reason why the Creed carries just its present form, or why so much should be left out of it, that Puritanism is apt to think of first, in its own abstract way. The orthodoxy of New England, for instance, can hardly be said at all to grow forth organically from the primitive mind or consciousness of the Church, as embodied in this symbol. Is not this strange and startling fact entitled to some consideration? We are firmly persuaded that it will be felt to be solemnly significant, in proportion exactly as it is made the subject of earnest thought. An orthodoxy which owns no inward fellowship with the Creed, and which feels itself complete in a wholly different way without it, deserves to be regarded with distrust, and may well be asked to give a reason of the hope that is in it under such abstract and unhistorical form. We are free to confess, that, in our view, any scheme of Christianity to which the voice of the Creed has become thus strange, labors under a most serious defect; and we need no other proof than the general fact here noticed, to show what is shown by so many proofs besides, that Puritanism, with all its great excellencies and merits, involves a material falling away from the faith of the sixteenth century as well as from that of the early Church.

VI. For the settlement of our existing theological and ecclesiastical difficulties, the first and most indispensable necessity is a true and hearty inward submission to the authority of the Creed, according to its original intention and design. Not that this is to be taken as of itself the sum and end of all theology; but all sound doctrine and true church life, must proceed forth from a common faith here, as their only sure ground, and it is vain to dream of their being prosperously advanced in any other way. It is mere loss of time, for instance, to argue the question of election, or that of infant baptism, with those who are not imbued,

in the first place, with a true reverence for the Apostles' Creed. It is, in truth, of very little consequence, in such case, whether it be the affirmative or the negative of any such question that is maintained; as growing forth organically, not from the primary substance of the Christian faith at all, but from some other ground altogether, the opinion whether right or wrong in its notional and formal character, is sure to be in its inward material constitution, unchristian and wrong. So, as we have just seen, the doctrine of justification itself, in its right outward shape, may become, through such divorce from the life of the Creed, in the highest degree false and dangerous. Election, the atonement, imputation, &c., can have no validity as christian doctrines, in an abstract view, but only as they can be developed from the concrete mystery here apprehended by faith. Theology in any other form, is always necessarily rationalistic, an effort to build faith on intellect, whereas the true order is just the reverse. This rightly understood and felt, would at once greatly narrow the field of theological controversy, as well as greatly facilitate the proper conclusion of its cardinal debates. How much, especially of our modern disputation, our *sect-fights*, we may say, generally, would be found by this rule to be little better than mere *skiomachy*, the battling of phantom shapes projected on the air. The first condition of all sound theology is, active sympathy with historical Christianity, with the idea of the Church, with the catholic mystery of the Creed. So also as regards all church questions; we do but run ourselves into endless talk, if we propose to settle them from any other ground, or in any other frame of mind. For instance, the question of using, or not using, a settled liturgy in public worship; how much of the argument on both sides, do we not find proceeding under a wholly different, and, therefore, wholly unsatisfactory form? The interest is vindicated or opposed on purely outward grounds, instead of being referred, as it should be, first of all, to the interior demands of Christianity itself, as embodied in the Creed. Or take the question of *Episcopacy*. It has been much the fashion to place it all round, on such *ab extra* proofs and reasons, as though the point were to make out a simply external warrant for or against it, independently altogether of the contents of the christian life itself. Thus Episcopalians

often try to find it outwardly prescribed in the New Testament ; a vain and hopeless task, which only serves to countenance the equally vain and fruitless attempt, on the other side, to overthrow it in the same mechanical way. To make Episcopacy the necessary hedge of Christianity, which we are to be sure of first on outside reasons, whether biblical or historical, in order that we may then be sure of the inclosed truth, is just again to subordinate faith rationalistically to the lower authority of the understanding ; for how can such a purely outward and mechanical authority be a whit better at last, than any other form of thought and will which is not ruled by the very substance of the truth itself. Who may not see, that if Episcopacy be indeed the *first* thing towards a sound faith, it ought to come first also in the Creed, or, at least, to follow immediately the general article of the Holy Ghost ; whereas, in truth, as we all know, it has no place in the Creed whatever. Are we then, at once, to infer from this, on the other hand, that Episcopacy is false, or that no definite organization is required as the normal form of the Church ? By no means. Only this is not the way in which the question can ever be settled. What we need for that, especially just now, is a general hearty return to the catholic life of the Creed, as the necessary point of departure for coming to a true solution of all our church questions. This we firmly believe is something that *can* take place extensively, long before we are able to see at all to the *end* of the perplexing difficulties with which we are now surrounded ; and that *must* take place, indeed, before a single step can be successfully made towards their proper practical resolution. It is the idea of the Church, the mystery of Christianity as it is made sure to us by faith in the Apostles' Creed, something older certainly, and deeper in its own nature, than any mere outward hedge surrounding it, which we are bound first of all to embrace ; which alone is sufficient to draw after it any right theory or practice, as regards all other church interests ; and which, therefore, we have it in our power to begin with, as an *a priori* foundation, for reaching in the end the results that the case requires. A convention of sects to negotiate a federal Church, is much like a convention of the blind to settle the laws of light. We must be in the Creed, and so have faith in the Church, in

order to find it, or to settle its exact form and limits. This is the true method for bringing to an issue the sacramental question, the liturgical question, the question of festival days. An active revival of the consciousness expressed in the Creed, would in due time restore all these great interests to their pristine authority. And we will just add, in the way of friendly hint to Episcopalians, that if their favorite system of church polity *could* be vindicated as necessary, in this way, to the conservation of the great catholic ideas that enter into the primitive faith, it would be, in our estimation, an argument of more weight and force in its favor, than whole tomes of learning employed to establish its authority in an outward and abstract view.

J. W. N.

ART. XXI.—THE RULE OF FAITH.—*Concluded.*

HAVING defined our subject and glanced at its earlier history,* we shall next *notice the leading false theories of it, which more or less prevail*, and conclude with *a statement of the evangelical doctrine in the case.*

III. It has been the mournful destiny of the Church and her ordinances, from the first, to be perverted and scandalized by the false zeal or the depravity of those professing to be her sincere friends. Driven thus from one extreme to another, and tossed by the contentions ever connected with such movements, her history presents, in this view, an ever varying scene of agita-

* Which was explicitly stated to be the *sole object* of the former article, and more than which, consequently, no intelligent reader would expect to find in it. As to the *definition* given, it is hoped that those who did not discover it at first, have been so fortunate as to find it since, lying very quietly in simple *italics*, and in its proper place, about the middle of p. 50. If they have not, we really know of no better remedy than *pica!*