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ART. I.—NOMINALISM AND REALISM.*

BY REV. J. H. DUBBS, A. M., POTTS TOWN, PA.

NOT many years ago, that period of human history which, in round numbers, may be said to extend from the sixth to the sixteenth century of the Christian era, was almost universally known as, "*the Dark Ages*." Many persons, who were otherwise well informed, implicitly believed, that those unhappy ages were destitute of even a single ray of intellectual or religious light, to break the gloom of their Cimmerian darkness. The poet Coleridge, however, as early as half-a-century ago, ventured to assert, in opposition to the reigning sentiment, that "the Middle Ages are dark only to those who themselves have not light enough to read them." Yet perhaps this bold assertion touches an opposite extreme. In one sense, the Middle Ages were indeed dark, and must remain obscure to every modern student. It could not well be otherwise, than that there should be much darkness in the period that immediately succeeded the subversion of the ancient civilization of the Ro-

* REALISMUS UND NOMINALISMUS in ihrem Einfluss auf die Dogmatischen Systeme des Mittelalters. Ein Beitrag zur Dogmengeschichte und zur Geschichte der Philosophie, aus den Quellen dargestellt von H. O. Koehler, Pastor zu Gr. Vielen in Mecklenburg. Gotha, verlag von Friedrich Andreas Perthes, 1858. 8vo. pp. 192.

ART. VIII. THE UNITY OF THE APOSTLES' CREED.

BY J. W. NEVIN, D.D., LANCASTER, PA.

WHAT has been said of the origin and structure of the Apostles' Creed, in our article in the January number, has already brought into view, in some measure, its organic unity and its fundamental authority for the Christian world. It is not by chance, or through the arbitrary outward ordering of men in any way, as we have seen, that either the matter or the form of the symbol established themselves in the beginning, or that, having so established themselves, they have found acknowledgment as the one only sure basis of Christian belief in the universal Church through all ages. The Creed could not have carried with it historically this universal force, for the Oriental, Roman Catholic, and Protestant worlds, if it were not in its own nature, and in its own essential constitution, of true ecumenical and fundamental character for Christianity itself; in such sort, and to such extent, that no scheme of Christian truth or doctrine can be regarded as valid for faith at all, which has not started originally from this form of sound words, and which does not continue rooted and grounded in it to the last.

The unity of the Creed, we say, is organic. It is so, both as to its matter and as to its form. The different articles of which it consists grow forth from a single principle; and the force of this principle reaches into all its articles, determining their existence, and imparting to them severally all their significance and truth. Each article is what it is as an object of faith, only through its relation to the general root out of which all grow; while the root also is what it is as an object of faith, only through its relation in like manner to what thus proceeds from it in the way of necessary derivation and growth. Such is the oneness of the Creed in its matter; its articles together make up a single whole. This oneness of matter, however, involves at the same

time necessarily oneness of form also. Viewed as an organic whole, in other words, the articles, or parts of which the symbol is composed, are not only derived from a common principle or root, but they are so derived from this that their relation to it serves to fix and determine, at the same time, their relation also to one another; so that as objects of faith, they can be apprehended truly only in the order in which they are here made to challenge faith, and in no other order. This does not mean, of course, that each article must always be distinctly expressed, to give us a valid Christian confession. We have seen already that there was what may be called a historical development of the articles of the Creed in part, in the beginning; and it is quite possible still to make a good confession, that shall not go beyond the acknowledgment of the Holy Trinity, as we are bound to it in our baptism, or that shall be no more even than St. Peter's memorable act of faith, *Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God*. But the Creed in any such abbreviated form is always potentially the Creed in its full form—the presence from the first implicitly of all that this is found to comprise at the last explicitly; and what we mean to say now is, that, when it comes to such explication and full utterance, all the articles of the Creed have not only their existence, but their position and place also, necessarily determined by the constitution of the symbol itself. They necessitate and condition one another in the order in which they are here actually put together, and allow no other order.

This necessary organization of the Creed, we have already seen, proceeds from its correspondence with the actual movement of the Christian salvation, as it takes its rise in the mystery of the Incarnation, and runs its course onward to the life everlasting. It is the simple response of faith to what is thus comprehended objectively in the coming of Christ in the flesh—the true historical gospel (“good tidings of great joy”) carried out to its last consequences and results. Only as answering in this way to the actual order of the gospel, may we conceive of faith here as being faith at all, and not simply fancy or speculation. The Creed is, by its very conception, the primitive and

deepest (and therefore most necessary and universal) consciousness of the Christian Church, moving in full harmony with the fundamental movement of Christianity itself. As such it is of force for all ages. It can never be superseded by any other form of supposed sound words. There can be no getting back of it, or aside of it, to the apprehension of what Christianity is, in any different way. No scheme of Christian belief, no construction of Christian doctrine, can deserve to be considered sound or safe, which does not grow forth organically from the radical organization of Christianity as we have it in the Apostles' Creed.

They labor under a grand mistake, then, who imagine that it can ever be possible to form a better basis or platform of faith for the Christian world, than that which is comprised in this ancient symbol. There is, we know, a large amount of religious thinking at the present time, in this country particularly, which is of a different mind. Much of what claims to be the best form of Protestantism among us—Protestantism in its most enlightened and most evangelical character—considers itself to have out-grown entirely the leading-strings of the Creed, and to be more than equal to the task of providing in short order, at any time, a decidedly better scheme of fundamental Christian doctrine. In the view of this Puritanic school, the Apostles' Creed is entitled to a certain sort of traditional respect, on account of the honor with which it has been regarded in past ages; but it belongs properly to those past ages, we are told, and not to our age; it is now ecclesiastically dead, if not absolutely buried, and any attempt to set it up again as a living rule of faith can deserve only to be looked upon with pity and contempt. Such modern religionists can see nothing particularly worthy of admiration in the Creed, but much rather to be dissatisfied with. What of fundamental truth there is in it, they are ready to tell us, might be expressed in better terms; some of its articles are unscriptural, and involve actual error; material points of faith are not found in it at all; so that altogether, taken in its own original sense and without any sort of mental qualification, it seems to them to be anything but

such a summary of the first truths of religion as the best interests of religion demand. They feel it to be at once crude in its matter and poor in its form, and look upon it as being a witness and proof of the spiritual weakness of the period to which it owes its birth, far more than an argument of its spiritual strength.

The fundamental articles of Christianity, for those who think in this way, group themselves always into a form very different from the Creed, which is felt by them at the same time to be far more logically methodical and complete. Where the scheme claims to be evangelical, in the technical sense of the term, it will be found to run, for example, in some such order as the following. Beginning with the existence and the leading attributes of God, we shall have in the next place the mystery of the Holy Trinity; then the inspiration and divine authority of the Bible (or it may be the Bible first, as the principle of all revealed religion, and then the Trinity); next the fact of the fall, and the state of sin and misery to which it has reduced our ruined race; then, possibly, the decree of election, underlying the whole plan of redemption as in the Westminster Catechism (or with a more liberal construction this can be left out); next the incarnation and the union of the two natures in Christ's Person; then the atonement, wrought by His death upon the cross, and followed by His resurrection from the dead; then the necessity of repentance and faith; then the doctrines of regeneration, justification and sanctification; all ending, finally, with the resurrection of the dead, the general judgment at the end of the world, the eternal blessedness of the righteous, and the going away of the wicked into everlasting damnation. Of the sacraments, baptism and the Lord's Supper, mention may be made possibly somewhere in the system; but not in a way to make them of essential account in the constitution of the Christian salvation; while the article of the Church, in all probability, will be allowed to pass without any notice whatever.

Conventional platforms of faith, more or less in this form, have become common in modern times. Congregational Churches in particular, of the Puritanic way of thinking, are ac-

customed to form in some such style for themselves doctrinal "covenants," as they are called, to which all are required to assent and agree, who join themselves to their communion; this being especially what is to be considered their profession of the Christian faith. And there is not a single one of these societies probably, which is not fully persuaded that it has in its own particular platform, thus constructed, a far more exhaustive and efficient summary of the first truths of Christianity, and a far more sure and firm basis of theological orthodoxy, than any that has ever been supposed to be comprised in the Apostles' Creed. No one of them would be willing at all to substitute the Creed for its church covenant. To do so, would be felt to involve some want of sympathy with the full and proper sense of the Gospel, and could only be regarded in this view as a falling away from a higher to a lower faith. It must seem at once both lax and unevangelical.

But let no one be deceived by any pretensions of this sort. We may have platforms of Christian doctrine different from the Creed, which for certain purposes are important and worthy of respect; but we never can have any, we repeat, that may deserve to come in the room of the Creed, or that may be entitled to confidence as original compends of Gospel truth on the outside of the Creed. The best of these modern platforms is but a synopsis of what are taken to be the chief articles of the Christian religion, considered in the way of outward reflection; it is the work of the understanding, rather than the direct product of faith; and as such never can be made to stand for the Creed, without derangement and damage to the whole idea of Christianity.