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ART. I.—THOUGHTS ON THE CHURCH.

THOUGHTS ; not formal argument or discussion. What the case requires, is not immediately and first of all a full regular construction or theory of the doctrine of the Church ; much less a direct plea for any existing church organization. Back of all this lies the region of first principles and elementary ideas, by whose right determination alone it can ever be possible to bring any such theory or scheme to fair and proper trial. Of what account can it be to dispute concerning the power of the sacraments, or about points of ecclesiastical order, where the parties in controversy have no common conception whatever of the nature of the Church itself, but set out in their thinking with regard to it from wholly different points of observation ? The great matter, in every such case, is to get attention fixed on first truths, without regard for the time to the polemical issues with which they may be concerned in actual life. There must be of course always an intimate living connection between what is first here and what is secondary ; the practical issues involve necessarily their own theoretical principles, the ideal elements out of which they grow. But still the two things, as all may easily perceive, are not by any means the same. They are capable of full separation at least for thought. Many hold their practical notions

with great zeal, without seeing at all the theoretical first truths which lie at the ground of them, and without having courage it may be to own the authority of any such truths when confronted with them face to face. Their principles are for their thinking implicit rather than explicit; in the mind, if we may so distinguish, but not in the understanding. And just so, on the other hand, it is possible to make ideas and principles here the subject of thoughtful contemplation, without running them out at once into any particular practical system. We do not mean to say, that the ideas themselves may cease to be practical. They are no metaphysical abstractions. They go at once into the depths of the Christian life; and to commune with them at all in a real way, is to have necessarily the most solemn and profound sense of their practical importance. But this does not preclude the possibility of their earnest consideration, as a separate preliminary and preparation for their being carried forward subsequently to any results in which they may find their proper practical conclusion. And just such preparation it is most of all, we may say, that is needed to open the way towards the true and right settlement of any of these results.

Thoughts, we say again; not words merely for the indolent, nor dreams for the sentimental, nor empty speculation for the curious. Thoughts for the *thoughtful*; for such as have a will to think, and at the same time some power to think; for such as know the solemnity of the subject, and feel the necessity of looking at it with an earnest and manly spirit; for such as have their mind set on real things in the world of religion, more than upon names simply and outward traditional forms. What such need in any case, is not so much full discussion, as fruitful suggestion, hints for reflection, material for silent personal meditation. They take not their thinking at second hand, but are ready nevertheless to honor and welcome any thought which may serve as an occasion to put them on thinking for themselves in the right direction. A single idea with such may be of more account, than a whole volume of elaborate ar-

gument with many; because it shall be found to carry with it a truly creative force in their minds, giving rise to other ideas, and gradually making room for the presence of a new spiritual world. Our present article is for this class of persons. We write for the religiously thoughtful; not as offering to take the work of thought out of their own hands; nor yet as pretending to set before them any particular church scheme, rounded at all points and ready for their use; but only for the purpose of assisting and guiding their own thoughtfulness on that great subject under consideration, that it may be exercised to the best purpose and with the best effect.

The Question of the Church is in its ground and principle *One*. To a superficial thinker this may not be at once apparent. On first view, there might seem to be rather a number of church questions meeting in no common ground. At one time, the matter in dispute is Episcopacy; at another time, it is the power of the Sacraments; then again, it may be the use of a Liturgy, the observance of the Church Year, or the stress which it is proper to lay on the forms and ceremonies generally of religious Worship. It soon becomes evident, however, on serious consideration, that all these points, different as they may seem, involve here in some way the presence of a thought or idea more general than themselves, through the power of which they come together at last in the form of a single great question. These are after all subordinate and secondary issues only, the whole significance of which lies in the sense of a far deeper and more comprehensive issue that continually conditions them from behind. The sense of this may be indeed more an instinct, than any clear apprehension; still it is always at hand, where any true interest is taken in these subordinate questions. Hence it is never difficult to know, how the parties on any one such question will form themselves, when the subject for consideration comes to be another. The lines are still drawn always as between the same churchly and unchurchly tendencies; and no one is

at a loss to anticipate in each case beforehand in what way the distinction must fall. This distinction, therefore, is not made by any of these subordinate issues, nor yet by all of them taken together; but it forms the rule and measure rather by which *they* come to exist. It is not a particular view of the sacraments that makes a man to be churchly or unchurchly; but it is his sense of the Church, on the contrary, that gives complexion and character to the view he may have of the sacraments. The church feeling thus is older and deeper in the order of nature than the sacramental, or the liturgical, or any other of like partial kind and form. The partial interest in each case refers itself spontaneously to the general interest in which it is comprehended, and bears witness in doing so to the unity of the whole subject. There is, accordingly, on all sides, a sort of intuitional sense of such ultimate unity or oneness reaching through the various questions that are agitated in regard to the Church, which may be said to go much beyond what is generally clear for the understanding. All these questions are felt to resolve themselves finally into one, which is the *Church Question*, in the full and proper sense of the term.

This general issue, in which all secondary questions in regard to the Church come finally together, is not imaginary only and unreal, or of only slight and insignificant account. Some affect at times to look upon it in this light, making it to be at best a question of mere forms, or a controversy about empty fancies and dreams. They will have it, that it argues both a want of religious earnestness, and a want of sound judgment and good sense, to take much interest in the subject, or to have any serious difficulty whatever with its pretensions and claims. But this style of thinking can never satisfy long any truly thoughtful mind. It cannot be said to satisfy really the class of persons by whom it is assumed as a convenient affectation; for they show always an instinctive sense of the significance of the Church Question, which is not to be silenced or kept down by any judgment of this sort. If the case were in

truth even for themselves what they pretend to make it, they would not be so easily moved as they are by what they consider its provocations. The question is felt all round to involve far more than any dispute concerning mere names and outward forms. However near the surface of Christianity the immediate matter of debate may seem to be in any particular case, the parties in controversy have the sense really of a general interest at stake which reaches ultimately to the very ground of the Christian life itself, and is held sufficient to justify a measure of zeal and intolerance that would bear no sort of proportion otherwise to the occasion calling it forth. Only in this way can we understand the spirit, which is found to rule in general the agitation of the Church Question, and which comes into view more or less in the discussion of every topic that runs into it as its necessary end. Difference here is felt to imply a deeper and more radical separation, than any which results from the ordinary theological divisions of the Christian world, and one that is more readily resented as a sort of direct antagonism allowing no compromise or reconciliation. The relation of the two opposing interests is one of broad, open exclusiveness and intolerance. It is such as leaves no room for mutual sympathy or common understanding. In this respect it goes beyond the distinction of mere sect in its usual form, and is felt to carry with it a deeper and wider meaning than is comprehended in the occasions and causes by which our religious sects generally are held apart. It is not co-ordinate and parallel simply with the difference that holds for instance between Calvinists and Arminians, between Congregationalists and Presbyterians, or between Methodists and Baptists. The questions and interests that divide such sects, however important they may seem to be when separately considered, are all felt to be of less fundamental moment than the issue which is brought into view by the idea of the Church, and are readily made to give way when it is felt necessary to take common ground over against its claims. All this goes to show the radical nature and multitudinous bearings of

the Church Question. It enters necessarily into the very conception we form of Christianity, and may be said to exercise a moulding influence, and conditioning power, over the whole structure of the Christian faith.

Some proper sense of the true character of the Church Question in the view now stated, some power to perceive and acknowledge in a fair manner its claims to respect, must be considered to be an indispensable preliminary condition to any right inquiry or just judgment concerning its merits one way or another. The want of such appreciation, the absence of such positive insight into the reality and magnitude and true religious earnestness of the problem to be here solved and settled, is an argument at once, wherever found, of full disqualification for the task of taking it in hand; and goes with good reason, we may add, to create a presumption of wrong against the cause in whose service it appears. For in the nature of the case, the disqualification must be *moral*, and not simply natural. Not to be able to see at all the solemn interest of the subject, is necessarily in some degree also not to be willing to see it. There is a measure of insincerity and affectation always, we have reason to believe, in any such assumed posture of indifference or contempt towards what all feel notwithstanding to be of the deepest meaning for Christianity. Children feel it; it enters as an instinctive sentiment into all unsophisticated piety; the sense of it reveals itself, as we have already seen, even in those who pretend to make light of it, by the intemperate spirit with which they are sure to meet the subject wherever it comes in their way. There is that in their interior consciousness here, which gives the lie palpably to what they say with their lips and try to think in their hearts. Such being the case, we repeat, they are not qualified to sit in judgment on what they undertake thus magisterially to condemn. They lack the conditions of the hearing ear and the seeing eye. We have a right to distrust their cause, for the very reason that it allows, and seems to favor, a spiritual posture which we may easily know to be so dishonest and false.

Paganism in its first conflict with Christianity, affected in this way an entire superiority to the whole question which this last offered for its consideration. It could not condescend to meet it in any earnest and serious style. The story of the Gospel was treated as a Jewish dream, too foolish and absurd to deserve the least respectful attention; and the religion of those who embraced it was held to be a fair occasion for unbounded mockery and scorn, as being fit only for such as had taken leave of their senses. So Paganism talked; and so, no doubt, Paganism tried also to believe, persuading itself that its view of things was the fruit of actual knowledge and conviction. But it is easy to see now that this was not the case; and that for a thoughtful mind even then there might have been found a strong presumption for the Christian cause in the very posture and spirit of the unbelieving power by which it was thus superciliously opposed. For Paganism had no power to sustain itself quietly and steadily in this affectation of contempt towards Christianity; as it might surely have been able to do, if the new religion had been in fact so worthy of being laughed at as it pretended to think. There was that in its own consciousness, which after all gave the lie to its professed indifference, and compelled it in spite of itself to feel that it was at issue in this case with a force which threatened nothing less than its own destruction. However particular points of the Christian controversy might seem to offer easy and fair opportunity for caricature and overwhelming explosion, for biting wit or triumphant sneer, there was still an evident feeling all the time that the subject did not end in any such points, that all these particular questions resolved themselves mysteriously into the presence of a deeper general question lying behind, and that this had to do in truth with the universal life of the world as it then stood, Paganism knew in this blind way at least, in the midst of all its levity, that Christianity was a great power, an earnest power, a power that had a right to challenge its solemn apprehension and dread. It was the sense of this precisely, which made it impossible for it to treat

Christianity in the way it could treat other religions. They might be tolerated, even where they were despised. But for Christianity there could be no toleration. Over against its claims, there was no room for equanimity or patience. Hence the strange spectacle of that which was ridiculed as the most unmeaning of all religions, being the most ready object nevertheless of wrath and persecution on the part of those who made themselves superior to it in such style. No one can consider such a relation, without perceiving at once that it implied weakness and wrong on the side of Paganism, and a lack of power to cope fairly with the strength of the interest it sought to crush. Its want of ability to meet the claims of Christianity in an earnest and serious manner, its superficial levity in a case whose profound interest at the same time it was compelled to confess in the secret depths of its own mind, made it certain in the circumstances that it could do no justice to the Christian argument, and that any judgment it might pronounce upon it was far more likely to be wrong than right.

And so in any case, where a deep moral interest is involved, where a question of momentous practical bearings is to be settled, there must be some proper sense of the true earnestness of the subject, some sympathy with it, and some power to perceive and appreciate its claims to respect, before there can be any fitness or right to sit in judgment upon it; and no verdict or conclusion reached in regard to it without such previous qualification, can ever deserve to be held of any account.

The case now before us comes fully within the scope of this rule. Where there is no power, because at bottom there may be no will, to see and acknowledge the true solemnity of the issues involved in the Church Question, there can be no right to make them the subject of judgment, no title to be heard respectfully in pronouncing upon them any opinion or sentence. Those who think to dispose of the whole subject by any summary process of contempt, as though it were without all reason and sense and fit only for derision or condescending pity, do but betray

the intrinsic weakness of their own position, and give room for a just presumption against the cause they represent. Their levity and frivolity here are out of character and out of place. Whether they choose to know it or not, the matter under consideration is both profound and earnest; and it argues religious unsoundness, to approach it, or to touch it, in any other than the most thoughtful and serious way.

The presumption against all such easy and wholesale judgment becomes still stronger, when it is considered that the views, which are thus summarily charged with madness and folly, have exercised in fact the widest and most powerful influence in the Christian world through all ages. One would suppose it might serve to tame somewhat the confident tone of those who allow themselves to think and talk in this way, only to know that by far the largest part of Christendom at the present time is ruled, both practically and theoretically, by the authority of just that system of ideas in regard to the Church, which they are accustomed to revile and deride as resting on no ground of reason whatever. But the case becomes a great deal stronger, when it is remembered that the same system of thought has in fact prevailed, with overwhelming authority, in every age of the Church from the beginning. There is no mistake with regard to this point. It is just as plain as it is possible for it to be made by the evidence of history. We read the full proof of it in all the movements of Christian antiquity. Right or wrong, reasonable or unreasonable, the very idea of the Church which is now denounced in the quarter of which we are speaking as no better than a silly dream, is that precisely which is found to pervade the reigning mind of the Church catholic from the century of the Apostles down to the century of the Reformation. It meets us in the old Creeds; it speaks to us from every page of the Christian Fathers; it breathes through all the ancient Liturgies; it enters into the universal scheme of the early Christian Faith. The very points in it which strike

the party in question as most grossly obnoxious to vilification and reproach, were admitted and proclaimed without the least feeling of reserve. Points, for example, that such a man as Mr. Spurgeon, the popular juvenile preacher of London, can find no terms too strong to stigmatize as the perfection of brainless puerility, had power notwithstanding to command the reverence of entire ecumenical synods, and were received everywhere with unquestioning faith by the wisest and best men. What is with him a subject only for heartfelt mockery, was a solemn heavenly mystery to the mind of an Augustine or a Chrysostom. He finds it easy to wade, where an Origen or a Jerome found ample room to swim.

We do not mean to say, that this sort of authority should of itself settle the question on which it is brought to bear. We are not pleading now the argument of prescription and use, in Tertullian's style, in favor either of the Church system as a whole, or of any point which may be comprised in it as a part. The question is not, whether baptismal regeneration, (in the old Christian sense as distinguished from the modern Puritanic confusion of terms,) is to be held true, because it was notoriously the doctrine of St. Augustine, and of all the Fathers before him and after him; nor whether the idea of a real oblation of Christ's body and blood in the sacrament of the altar is to be owned and accepted, because it most manifestly enters into all the ancient Liturgies; nor whether the article of "one holy catholic Church," in its original historical meaning, is to be considered a necessary object of faith, because it was made to be so, as every body knows, in the primitive Creeds. Nothing of this sort is before us at present. All that we now mean to say is simply this: that let it fare with these great points as it may, the mere fact of their being so circumstanced as they show themselves to be in the view now mentioned, ought of itself to shield them from the flip-pant, not to say ribald tone and style, in which they are too often approached by the class of thinkers who find it most easy to dispose of them at the present time. Their

method of resolving and settling this whole question, whose issues are so vast and great, without the least regard for the judgment of other ages, without the smallest respect for the opinion of hundreds and thousands of Christian men quite as wise and good, to say the least, as themselves, is altogether too sweeping, too presumptuously dogmatic, to be at all satisfactory to any earnest mind. Where the case *can* be disposed of in such style, there is reason at once to apprehend that it has never yet come to be rightly understood, or that the right moral conditions are not at hand for treating it with any sort of justice.

The presumption of wrong against this easy and light way of meeting the subject becomes still greater, when it is considered that the views which go to form the church system of Christianity, and which have such a weight of outward authority in their favor, find a wide and profound sanction also in the common religious nature and constitution of men. We have full evidence of this at once in the fact that they have been able, in the way we have just seen, to master the faith of the Christian world to so great an extent through all ages, drawing all doctrines and instructions in their own direction; a fact which is only made the more striking, if we allow it to be assumed that the true Christian scheme, in its original Apostolical form, was something wholly different from all this, diametrically opposed to it indeed, and that these views forced themselves into the Church therefore as an actual apostacy or falling away from that original scheme, against the will of Christ, and in full contradiction to the clear sense of the Scriptures. So much the enemies of the church system themselves are constrained to see and confess; and they try, accordingly, to turn the fact, in their shallow way, to the advantage of their own cause. Human nature, we are reminded, is carnal and corrupt, and always more ready to embrace a lie than the truth; and so, after the fashion of the somewhat famous *dictum*, "Every man is born an Arminian," it may be said also, Every man is born with a procliv-

ity to the notions which go to make up the church system as distinguished from Christianity in its proper spiritual and evangelical form. It is easy to see, however, that this amounts to no just solution of the difficulty whatever. The movement of Christianity in the direction now considered shows itself of quite too broad and profound a character, to be satisfactorily accounted for in this way. To understand it at all, we must refer it to a far deeper ground of life than any which is brought to view in the vanity and corruption merely of our fallen nature; which after all does not represent to us the deepest and last sense of our souls even in their present state. Such a fact as that which is offered to us in the almost universal reign of the church system, commencing so far back and reaching so far forward, bearing all things in its own direction, carrying along with it the deepest forces of the Christian life, hallowed by the prayers and sanctified by the sufferings of the best Christian ages, honored by the zeal of martyrs and the learning of fathers, conquering nations to the law of Christ and building into form the whole structure of their worship and faith—such a fact as this, we say, can never be rationally construed without recourse to the idea of a much deeper reason for it in the nature of man, than any which is found simply in its perversion through the power of sin. The whole phenomenon is of such an order, that in view of it we are bound to acknowledge a mysterious correspondence in some way between this style of religion and the inmost religious wants and impulses of the soul.

So much is apparent also, we may add, sufficiently so at least for all thoughtful persons, from the power it is found to exercise over many in modern times, under circumstances that might seem to be the most unfavorable to its influence. The reigning temper of Protestantism, in its present Puritanic form, is against it, not only having no sympathy with it, but absolutely intolerant of its presence. And yet in the bosom of this Protestantism itself, it seems to be a spirit which can never be effectually and finally laid. It is ever ready, sometimes in one form and sometimes in

another, to raise its unpopular head, and enter its solemn protest, more or less loudly, against what it conceives to be the downward tendencies of the predominant unchurchly interest. In almost every denomination we have, if not an open, at least a sort of quiet and silent war, going forward between the less churchly and the more churchly, the point of controversy being the question of retaining or parting with some idea, or some practice, involving still as far as it may reach the old conception of the Holy Catholic Church. But in some cases, the issue reveals itself in a far bolder and much more earnest form. Of this sort is the Anglo-catholic movement in the Church of England, and the Old Lutheran movement in the German Church. Nothing can well be more superficial, than the style in which it is pretended too often to account for such manifestations of the church spirit; nothing more inwardly helpless and imbecile, than the way in which it is attempted in most cases to meet them and put them down. Our business now, however, is not to speak in their direct defence; we leave them severally to their several merits whatever these may be. But so much at least we have a right to say: the circumstances under which they come into view are such as absolutely preclude the idea of their being the product of ignorance, pride, self-will, dislike to spiritual religion, or any other bad natural power of this sort, and make it certain on the contrary that they stand connected with the inmost religious wants, and most earnest spiritual longings, of our general human life. Affectation, sentimentalism, and pedantry, may indeed join themselves to such a movement, and be carried along with it in a sort of outward way; caricaturing the true sense of it, and making it offensive or ridiculous; as they may do, and have a tendency to do, in the case of any great religious movement whatever. But the true ruling force of the stream must be sought in depths far more profound.

It requires indeed only some proper communion with the subject in our own spirits, to perceive the truth of the general thought which we have now in hand. It is

wonderful with what power church ideas make their appeal to the soul, when it is brought into the right posture and habit for perceiving their force. And this habit is anything but such as it might be supposed to be, on the theory of those who seek to resolve all sentiments of the sort into worldly and unspiritual motives. It does not come of logic. It is no fruit of the mere understanding. It owns no sympathy with the noise and rush of material interests, the common outward life of the present world. It is a habit rather, in which the mind is brought to fall back upon the depths of its own nature, and to converse with the spiritual things, not so much in the way of outward reflection, as in the way of inward intuition.

In some such style it is, that the unperverted thoughts of childhood are accustomed to go out towards the realities of the world unseen and eternal; and children, as we have had occasion to say before, have a natural receptivity for all churchly ideas; a truth which any one can easily verify, by remembering the experience of his own childhood, or by observing the childhood of others. What true child ever had any difficulty in admitting the idea of baptismal grace, or in acknowledging the mystical force of the Lord's Supper? So at every point children are peculiarly open to just those views and sentiments in religion, which enter into what may be termed the objective churchly side of Christianity, as we have it developed in the old Catholic Church. The only true order of faith for them is always the Apostles' Creed. No symbol, no catechism, ever speaks to them like that. They are disposed to believe in saints, and, to hold in reverence the memory of confessors and martyrs. They have an active sense for the liturgical in religion, for the mystical, for the priestly and sacramental. It costs no trouble to bend their first religious thoughts this way. Their earliest piety will not flow smoothly in any other channel.

And thus it is through life, where the child is allowed to remain still "father to the man," in any right sense, and where opportunity is still found for the religious sensibili-

ties to work in their proper primitive form. The "testimony of the soul," on which Tertullian lays so much stress, as being on the side of all religion, and as bearing witness in particular to the claims of Christianity the absolutely true religion, goes unquestionably in favor also of Christianity under the churchly view, and lends countenance to the whole circle of thoughts and feelings in which this view may be said to have its natural and proper home. There is that in the inmost depths of our religious being, which echoes responsively to the voice of this special form of the Christian faith, wherever there is room for it to be rightly and fairly heard. Is it not here, in truth, we reach the ground and foundation of all religious art? All such art is churchly by its very constitution, and ceases to be intelligible where some sense of the Church comes not in as a key to explain its meaning. Puritanic ideas are for the understanding; Catholic ideas speak more directly to the heart.

Here again, however, we do not mean to make the voice of nature in this form an argument at once for the truth of every particular point of opinion or belief, that may be found entering into the general order of faith which is thus commended to our regard. As the testimony of the soul in favor of Christianity at large cannot be held sufficient to accredit all views that prevail in the name of Christianity; as many such views may be superstitious, fantastic, exaggerated and false, even while they seem to fall back upon that general witness, and to find in it their natural encouragement and support; so ought it not to be considered strange certainly if the same testimony of the soul, uttered in favor of the Church, should appear improperly used in many cases to recommend like superstitions and errors prevailing in the name of the Church. Opinions may belong to a certain order of thought, and find in it their easy natural home, without being for this reason after all any part of its legitimate life. There may be, we have a right to suppose, wrong interpretations of Catholic feeling, false ways of carrying out the applications of Catholic truth,

just as we know there is room for like misconstruction and misapplication where other spheres also, whether of sentiment or principle, are concerned. We are not called upon here to discriminate between the true and the false in single particulars. Our argument is not now in behalf of any certain points. What we mean to assert is simply the authority of the church system in its general and whole view, its title to respect, its right to be acknowledged as a necessary side of the Christian faith.

The sense of the Church, as an article of faith, shows what power it carries with it for the interior life of the soul, by the way in which it is accustomed to work and make itself felt where it has once begun to prevail. It is then no barren opinion merely, no mechanical tradition simply, but the power of a living *idea*, which is not so much apprehended by the mind, as it seems itself rather to apprehend this, and to bear it along irresistibly in its own direction. The idea may not start at the centre; is more likely indeed to begin with some point in the general circumference of that great circle of thoughts which it pervades with its presence; but let the force of it be felt where it may first, it has a tendency always to grow and spread, reaching from one point to another, and settling itself always more widely and firmly in the mind. This serves to show the vitality of the idea. Those who have no sense for it, and with whom the consciousness of religion holds only in the unchurchly form, may look upon it, and speak of it, as a whim or caprice without any proper spiritual root in the soul; but the actual subjects of its power know better. They know it to be in themselves something both deep and living; it has for them the force of a real inward awakening; it is not so much an opinion with them as an experience; and the more it comes to prevail within them, the more impossible it becomes for them to rid themselves of its presence. Especially impossible is it for them to be engaged to any thing of this sort, at the bidding of such as show plainly that they have never really known in their

own minds the nature and meaning of that which they oppose. The case is felt to be one, in which no such purely outside judgment can deserve to be held of any weight.

A great argument for the idea of the Church appears in the fact, that all Christian sects find themselves compelled to do homage to it, indirectly at least if not directly, in spite even of their own natural disposition too often drawing them the other way. Sects are in their own nature hostile to the true conception of the Church; the sect spirit is constitutionally an unchurchly spirit. But notwithstanding this, we find among all properly Christian denominations some practical acknowledgment of the church system, as being necessary in some way to carry out and complete the full sense of the Gospel. There would seem to be in fact no escape from this, short of the giving up of Christianity altogether, and the resolution of it into merely natural religion. Christianity has no power, it would seem, to divest itself absolutely of that form of existence we call the Church. Hence no sect can avoid altogether the assumption of some church character, and the assertion of some of the elements of a true church life in its own favor. There is a difference of course in the case; some sects go much farther than others in the unchurchly direction; while all of them, in their various ways, fall short of the full conception of the Church, thus laboring under inconsistency and contradiction. But none of these is able to ignore and repudiate the conception as a whole. The most unchurchly among them is under the power of a law here which is too mighty to be cast off entirely, and with however bad a grace must conform in some part to the demands of the very system against which it claims to be an earnest uncompromising protest. Every sect has to be, whether it will or not, some sort of a *church*. Even the Baptists hold themselves to be something more in this view than the American Bible Society or Tract Society; and the most rank Congregational Independency will not allow itself to be just of one order with a city Young Men's Association or a Village Lyceum. Every

sect in its way sets itself up for a reliable and sufficient guide in the things of religion, an authorized exponent of the Divine will, the bearer of a true heavenly commission for the exercise of spiritual powers to which it would be nothing short of blasphemy to think of laying claim in any other view. Every sect arrogates to itself, in its own denominational range at least, religious functions that are in their very nature catholic ; prophetic functions, priestly functions, kingly functions ; the right of mediating between man and his Maker ; the power of the keys ; rights and powers generally, such as to be legitimate can flow only from a Divine commission, and such as cannot be honestly acknowledged at all therefore without being allowed to be as broad and universal as Christianity itself. The nearest approximation to a full and complete denial of the Church under the show of Christianity, comes to view among the Quakers ; but even with them some poor remains of the idea have been found necessary all along to preserve this show ; and the elimination of these now more and more from their system, is the sure signal of its speedy resolution everywhere into thin air. Rightly considered, nothing can well be of more force to establish the maxim, "No Church, no Christianity," than this compulsory witness in its favor on the part of the whole sect world, which may be considered in full conspiracy against it, and whose very life would seem to depend on its successful contradiction.

In view of these manifold relations to the idea of the Church, and the power it is found to exert over the conception of Christianity in such various ways, it becomes the more important that we should be able to fix our minds on what may be considered the fundamental form of this idea, as distinguished from its operations and effects under a derivative and merely secondary view. In all religious bodies we meet with the idea of the Church, expressed in some elements which owe to it clearly all their meaning and force ; while it is no less plain, that in many cases at

least such elements are at hand only in an isolated and fragmentary way, without reaching to the unity of a true church system, and without being referred to their own necessary ground and principle, the idea of the Church itself. We are bound, therefore, to distinguish in the case between what is derivative and what is original and fontal, and to look steadily through the first, if possible, back to the last; and it is plain also, that in doing this our inquiry ought to be concerned primarily not with particular organizations claiming to be churches, the Presbyterian, for instance, the Episcopal, or the Roman Catholic, but with the thought of the Church itself, its purely ideal nature, as something lying back of all such organizations, and seeking actualization through them in some way answerable to its own essential requirements and demands.

The true sense of the Church Question, in this view, that which forms its proper nerve and gist, is not found really in those points around which the controversy is most commonly made to revolve. The first matter needing to be settled is not the right of any outward historical organization to be considered the Church or a part of the Church, but what the Church itself must be held to be in theory or idea; not the force and value of any institution or usage or order which may be set forward in any quarter as evidencing the presence of the Church, but what this presence in any case must be taken actually to involve and mean. If men have no common notion or conception of the Church, some taking it to mean much and others taking it to mean very little or almost nothing at all, it can never be more than a waste of time for them to dispute concerning the modes of its being or the proper methods of its action. Only when the *idea* of the Church has been first brought to some clear determination, can the way be said to be at all open for discussing either intelligibly or profitably such questions as relate only to the manner in which the idea should be, or actually may be anywhere, carried out in practice. That is always a most heartless sort of controversy about church points, where the parties at issue

agree at bottom in disowning, or not perceiving, what forms in fact the true core of the subject in debate, and thus show themselves to be contending for an empty form and nothing more; as when the Baptist insists on the obligation of the sacraments against the Quaker, or the Congregationalist defends the baptism of infants against the Baptist, without any faith on either side in the old doctrine of sacramental grace; or as when the Episcopalian is violent for bishops, or for the use of a liturgy, against the Presbyterian, while for both alike all resolves itself into a question of mere outward appointment, and neither the Christian ministry nor Christian worship mean a particle more for the one than they mean for the other. Such questions, belonging to the periphery of the church system are of course important; but only as they are viewed in connection with the centre of the sphere in which they have their place. Disjoined from this in thought, they cease to have any meaning or force. What earnest mind can make much account of the question of infant baptism, if the whole sacrament be considered an outward sign merely without any sort of objective force? To what can the question of Episcopacy amount for any such mind, where the ministry is not held to be of strictly divine right, and the necessary channel of God's grace in the Church? It may be something relatively churchly to uphold the authority of the sacraments in opposition to the Quakers, to be in favor of infant baptism in contradiction to the Baptists, to go for Presbyterianism instead of Independency and Congregationalism, to press the distinguishing points of Anglican or American Episcopacy against all other denominations; but no such distinctions are sufficient of themselves to bring into view the absolute sense of the quality which is applied to them by the term churchly. To reach this, we must go farther back. The fundamental question is not of the sacraments, nor of a liturgy, nor of the church year, nor of ordination and apostolical succession, nor of presbyters, bishops, or popes; but, as we have said, of the nature of the Church itself, considered in its ideal character, and as an

object of thought anterior to every such revelation of its presence in an outward way.

Is the Church really and truly a constituent part of Christianity, the necessary form of its existence or being in the world? Does it belong to the "mystery of godliness," the constitution of grace, in such a sense that this must stand or fall with its presence? This, if we look at it rightly, is the question of questions for the subject before us, that on which turns the whole significance of the controversy concerning the Church. This is that last profound issue, towards which, whether with full consciousness or not, all other issues in the minds of men on the subject of the Church flow naturally as to their proper end, and in the bosom of which alone it is possible for them to be brought to any final and full solution. Accordingly as this question may be either affirmed or denied, all other questions appertaining to the church system will be found to retain or lose their interest. If the question be affirmed, and the only true and proper idea of the Church is held to be that which is expressed by such answer, it is easy to see how at once all points flowing from it, or depending upon it in any way, must acquire a corresponding solemnity of sense; how they must be considered no longer as things of curious and vain speculation merely, but as matters of deep practical import; how it must be felt, that instead of bearing to Christianity the relation simply of outward accidents or adiaborous forms, they reach in truth to its inmost heart, and have to do with the deepest spiritualities of its life. Let the answer, on the contrary, fall the other way, so that the Church shall be held to be no necessary constituent of Christianity, but only an arrangement joined to it from without, and it becomes then just as easy to see, how at once all points connected with it must be shorn, to a corresponding extent, of their meaning and interest, and how it can never be any thing more than pedantry at best to lay any great stress upon them, or to make them the subject of earnest strife one way or another. It is a poor business surely to stickle for forms, where the whole idea is disown-

ed which can make them to be of any force. Without faith in the mystery of the Church, as being the real bearer of heavenly and supernatural powers, to what can it amount to be zealous for the mere modes of its action, the mere circumstantialities of its constitution? Then indeed to be churchly, is to be at the same time formal and superstitious, narrow and pedantic. Then the more men pretend to lean this way, the worse; since their religion in any such form must appear only the greater sham. The most ghastly of all shams is that which takes upon itself in fullest measure the form and show of what it pretends to be, without having in itself still the power of the central idea which is needed to breathe through the whole its proper life. What is the Christian ministry, what is ordination, what are sacraments, without the old conception of the Christian Church? Presbyterianism, without this conception, is a sham over against Congregationalism; as this itself is also over against the still more unchurchly position of Baptists and Quakers. But Episcopalianism without it must be held a worse sham than all.

No one can be said to know at all the meaning of the Church Question, no one is prepared to speak of it intelligibly or to propose, who has not been confronted with it face to face in the radical form now mentioned, and who has not felt it necessary to meet it in this form with some definite and distinct answer. All dispute about the outward organization of the Church, about its proper rights and powers, about its historical movement, and its actual presence in the world under any particular profession and title at a given time, must be in a great measure unmeaning and profitless without this. The question, *What is the Church?* is older in the order of nature than the question, *Where is the Church?* and must be brought to some steady determination for our thinking, before we can have any right at all to pronounce in regard to this last any judgment whatever

What is the Church? What is the true idea or concep-

tion of it, in the economy of the Christian salvation? Does it belong to the essence of Christianity; or is it something accidental only to its proper being, a constitution made to inclose it in an outward way, and capable of being separated from it without serious damage to its life?

This, we say, is the true *Church Question*, the root of that great controversy concerning the Church, whose ramifications reach so far, and whose multitudinous bearings are found to cover at last the entire field both of Christian doctrine and Christian practice. Here is the fountain head of the difference, which like some mighty stream divides throughout the churchly system of religion from the unchurchly. Here is the beginning of the great gulf fixed between them, which serves to place them as it were in two opposite worlds. No other issue, within the Christian sphere itself, descends so deep or reaches so far. It enters into the very idea of faith, affects the sense of all worship, conditions the universal scheme of theology, and moulds and shapes the religious life at every point. It gives rise to two phases of Christianity, which are so different as to seem at last indeed, in their full development, more like two Christianities than one.

Is the Church of the essence of Christianity, the necessary form of its presence, the only medium of its grace, the true organ of its power, in the world? Whatever difficulty there may be about the proper answer to this question in modern times, for the Christian world in the first ages there was none. They answered the question at once in the affirmative, and considered it treason to the Christian faith to think of answering it in any other way.

The full evidence of this lies before us in the Apostles' Creed; or rather, we should say, in all the primitive Creeds, For the Creeds of the early Church are in truth one; any differences among them being variations simply of the same theme, that touch not in the least the true unity of its sense. This theme takes in everywhere the idea of the Church; takes it in also under the very aspect of which we

are now speaking, as being of the essence of Christianity, and not simply one of its outward adjuncts. The doctrine or fact of the Church is not in the Creed by accident. It is there, just as the fact of Christ's glorification is there, in virtue of its belonging really and truly to the movement or progress of the general mystery of godliness, which it is the purpose of the Creed to present as the great object of the Christian faith. In no other view could it have a place in the Creed at all, if we suppose this to be a true organic representation of what Christianity is in its fundamental conception, and not a loose throwing together simply of particular opinions without inward law or reason. The article of the Church is in the Creed, not just by wilful determination on the part of the framers of the symbol, but by the constitutional necessities of the Creed itself. It is the necessary outbirth of the Christian faith, keeping pace with the progress of its glorious object, just at the point where it comes into view. As Christ's glorification makes room for the mission of the Holy Ghost, so the mission of the Holy Ghost unfolds itself with necessary consequence in the constitution of the Holy Catholic Church. Blot out that article, and the whole Creed is mutilated and broken in its sense.

It may help us to appreciate the force of the article in this view, if we allow ourselves to suppose some other article made to stand in its place. Take, for example, the doctrine of the authority of the Bible, as being the inspired word of God and the only infallible rule of faith and practice. Suppose the Creed to run: "I believe in the Holy Ghost, the inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, &c." It is very easy to see, that this would not fall in with the true organism of the symbol at all. The coming of the Holy Ghost, was not in order to the publication of the Holy Scriptures primarily, but in order to the founding of the Holy Catholic Church. For the thinking of the early Christian world, therefore, it was not possible to place the Bible before the Church in the order of faith. The Church was for them a fact deeper, and wider, and nearer to the

proper life of Christianity, than the Bible. Not with any feeling of disrespect for the Bible of course; and not from any doubt of its being the inspired word of God, but because their sense of Christianity was such as to require this order rather than any other.

There is no room for any mistake in regard to the sense, in which the Church is made to be an article of faith in the Creed. This is determined by its connexions, as well as by the whole aim and purpose of the formulary itself. The Creed is intended to set forth the true fundamental facts of the world of grace, as it has come to be established in the midst of the world of nature. These facts in such view are all mysteries, objects for faith as distinguished from natural understanding. The Church thus is made to be a mystery, the presence of a supernatural fact in the world, which men are required to acknowledge as a necessary part of the Christian faith. It is made to be this, moreover, in such a way as to carry along with it, in its own place, the full power of the Christian salvation. The Church, in the Creed, stands out manifestly as the connecting medium between all that goes before and all that follows after. The grace which starts in Christ's birth, and flows onward through his life, his death upon the cross, his descent to hades, his resurrection, his ascension to the right hand of God, and the sending of the Holy Ghost, is the same that then discharges its full stream into the bosom of the Church, and that is poured forth from this again in the benefits of redemption, from the remission of sins onward to the life everlasting. Beyond all question, the Creed means to affirm the being of the Church, as an indispensable link in the scheme of salvation, and as something not accidental merely but essential to the constitution of Christianity.

In this view, it defines itself and fixes its own attributes. It is necessarily one, holy, catholic, and apostolical. It can be no real object of faith at all, except in this character and form. Its ministry is of divine right. Its sacraments convey grace. The scheme of the Creed, in a word, is churchly throughout; and it is not possible to understand it, or

to have any sympathy with it, except from the posture of a true churchly faith. For the strictly Puritanic mind, it can never seem to carry a right sound.

If there could be any doubt concerning the proper sense of the Creed here, separately considered, it must disappear immediately in view of what may easily be known in other ways to have been the general faith of the early Church on this subject. As all the variations of the Creed proceed in one and the same strain, so also is this found to be in full harmony at the same time with the universal religious thinking of the time to which they belong. No one who has taken the least serious pains to qualify himself for an intelligent opinion in the case, can make any question in regard to this point. The idea of the Church which meets us in the Epistles of Ignatius, is the same that rules the polemics of Irenaeus, animates the zeal of Cyprian, and comes to its full systematic development at last in the theology of the great Augustine. It is the idea, by which all institutions and arrangements, all offices and sacraments, all forms and rubrics, belonging to the Church, are made to be something subordinate to the living constitution of the Church itself, in virtue of which only they can be supposed to carry with them either grace or power. Faith in the Church, with these Fathers, was not just faith in bishops, or in an altar, or in the use of a liturgy; for bishops, and altars, and liturgies, were common among such as were held notwithstanding to have neither part nor lot in the true commonwealth of Christ. It terminated on what the Church was supposed to be as a divine mystery, back of episcopacy, and behind all sacraments, symbols, and forms, the force of which must turn necessarily at last on its own nature. The peculiarity of this old church faith is, that it goes right to the heart of the true Church Question, where many are altogether unwilling to follow it, who still affect to make great account of it for other points; infant baptism, for instance, baptismal grace, the mystical power of the Lord's Supper, or the three orders of the ministry; without

perceiving that such points in fact mean nothing, save in union with the central life of the system to which they belong. The old faith went hand in hand with the Creed; saw in the Church the presence of a new order of life in the world, flowing from Christ's exaltation and the sending of the Holy Ghost; owned it for the body of Christ, and the home of the Spirit; ascribed to it for this reason heavenly prerogatives and powers; and found no difficulty accordingly in speaking of it as the ark of salvation, in whose bosom alone men might hope to outride safely the perils of their present life, and to be borne finally into the haven of eternal rest.

We speak not now of the merits of this faith. We ask not, whether it was right or wrong. All we wish is to hold it up to view steadily as a historical fact. In this light at least, it deserves our solemn attention; and no one certainly can be supposed to deal fairly and honestly with the Church Question, who is not willing to look the fact full in the face, or who does not feel it necessary to come to some right understanding with it in his own mind. Take it as we may, we find no Puritanism in the ancient Church; but touches of it only among heretical bodies on the outside. We can hardly read a page of the old ecclesiastical literature, Greek or Latin, without falling on something, the proper sense of which involves necessarily, if it does not directly affirm, the churchly view of religion. The authority of the church system is felt to stretch itself over the whole field of thought and life. Strange, is it not, if it should have been after all as brainless and heartless, as it is the fashion with some to make it in these last days!

A still farther argument for what we have seen to be the sense of the Creed in reference to the Church might be found, if it were needed, in the notorious unpopularity of the symbol among all unchurchly religious bodies, in proportion precisely to the measure of their alienation from the old idea of the Church. Here we have a fact again, make out of it what we may, which admits of no dispute,

Puritanism has no sympathy with the Creed; no taste for it; no power to make any honest use of it as a symbol of faith. Its notion of Christianity runs not naturally into any such form, but left to itself seeks always a different course of expression. The Creed does not sit easily upon it; finds no hearty and full echo in its soul; is allowed by it, therefore, to fall quietly into general neglect. Why is it that our Protestant sects commonly, at this time, make no use of the Creed either publicly or privately? The question surely deserves some consideration. Such indifference to the oldest formulary of the Christian faith can not be without profound significance in some way. The Baptists of course have nothing to do with it; the Methodists make no account of it; New England Congregationalists consider it the fossil relic only of a by-gone age; Presbyterians, as a general thing, regard it with suspicion, or else ignore it altogether. Can this be merely accidental? Could it be at all, if there were not at bottom, in all these cases, a material variation from the system of religious thought in which the Creed is constructed?

The nature of the variation may easily be understood. It turns upon the conception of the Church, which enters essentially into the structure of the Creed, and conditions both the form and spirit of it throughout. The article of the Church is not in the Creed as a loose separate particular only, joined to its other articles in a purely outward way. It holds its place there, by virtue of its own intrinsic right to be considered a necessary part of the system of faith which is embodied in the symbol. The order of this faith, the evolution of its proper organic sense, is such as imperiously to require the presence of the article just where it comes into view. The whole Creed, thus, moves in the power of the church system; all its articles have a churchly tone; and it is not possible for them to find a hearty and full response, where the Puritanic unchurchly spirit has come generally to prevail. This is the reason that it is so little popular with most of our religious sects at the present time. They can have no sympathy, as sects, with the old idea

of the Church. Hence, consciously or unconsciously, their indifference, if not positive dislike, to a symbol which is felt to be mysteriously full of it from beginning to end.

It would be a curious and interesting experiment, to try what would be the effect of the Creed upon the unchurchly habit of religion, if it were brought into use again where it is now thus unhappily forgotten or disowned. Let its authority be revived in the midst of any Puritanic sect. Let earnest be made with the use of it, for the purposes of religious instruction and worship. Let its old familiar voice be heard once more, in the family and in the great congregation. Let it be publicly honored in the sanctuary, at the altar and in the pulpit. Could the unchurchly habit of religion endure any such test? We feel very sure that it could not. It would be ready in the first place, to resent it as the coming in of a spirit dangerous to the interests of evangelical religion, an insidious tendency towards Puseyism or Popery. It must be forced in the next place, should the trial still go steadily forward, to bend gradually to the new order of thought thus pressed upon it, and to give up its unchurchliness in some measure at least in favor of the opposite style of Christianity. Puritanism and the Creed can never reign in full force together. The introduction of the Creed into general use in New England, would be the sure signal at once of a general revolution in its whole theological and ecclesiastical life.

Looking at things as we have seen them to be, it must seem strange certainly to find the representatives of this unchurchly Christianity—who have no power to frame their lips to a sincere pronunciation of the Apostles' Creed—boldly arrogating to themselves the highest style of evangelical orthodoxy, and denouncing as seriously in error all who refuse to be governed by their private rule and measure. What then is orthodoxy? Has the Christian world been mistaken all along, in supposing it to be rightly set forth, first of all, in the articles of the old Christian Creeds? Whatever else it may embrace in the way of true confes-

sional development, must it start at least in this form of sound words, and grow forth from it organically as its unchanging root? Can any later Confession, Catechism, or Creed, deserve to be considered of force, except as it may be taken to unfold and carry out what was here proclaimed to be the only order of faith in the beginning? Is the *Symbolum Apostolicum* to be regarded still as the primary, fundamental symbol of Christianity; or is it not? Let this question be answered. Let men look at it, and answer it fairly and distinctly in their own minds. Let our sects answer it to themselves, and to one another. Then we shall know all round, where we are, and what we mean. In this whole controversy concerning the Church, the first preliminary requiring to be settled would appear to meet us just here. There can be no meaning in it, if the parties in debate have no common faith in the Creed. When church principles, therefore, are called in question, or opposed in any quarter, it is but fair to ask first of all whether those who set their face against them are believers or unbelievers in Christianity as we have it defined in this primitive catholic symbol. No such unbeliever deserves to be considered respectfully in the case. What right can any one have to set himself up as a critic or judge of orthodoxy here, who is so grossly at fault in the quality of his own faith? To what can it amount, that the idea of the Church is disowned by those, who at the same time disown the idea of the Creed?

Windsor Place, Lancaster co., Pa.

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ART. I.—SAVONAROLA.

FEW men have excited such strong sympathies and equally strong antipathies among divines, historians and poets, and been submitted to such contradictory judgments both in the Roman Catholic and Protestant communion, as Jerome Savonarola, the leader and martyr of an unsuccessful politico-religious reform movement in Italy, and one of the most prominent and remarkable of the mediæval forerunners of Protestantism. He has been extravagantly lauded by the one as an inspired prophet, reformer and wonder-working saint, and as unjustly condemned by others as a priest-demagogue, a deluded fanatic, or a hypocritical impostor. It is still an unsettled question whether he resembled more St. Bernard or Arnold of Brescia, Luther or Thomas Münzer, Charles Borromeo or Gavazzi. He was burned as a heretic and schismatic under the excommunication of one pope, and almost canonized by another. Luther, Flacius, Beza, Arnold hailed him as a witness of the truth in the dark night of popery and as the prophet of the reformation; while latter Protestants, as the skeptic Bayle, the pietistic Buddeus,* and the liberal Roscoe, the enthusiastic admirer of Lorenzo de' Medici, assigned

* Buddeus, however, retracted in latter life the unfavorable view which he had maintained in his *exercitatio historico-politica de artibus tyrannicis H. Savonarolæ*.

ART. III.--THOUGHTS ON THE CHURCH..

SECOND ARTICLE.

CAN a sect be *evangelical*, which refuses to accept the Apostles' Creed as the fundamental symbol of its faith? The question is simple, clear, and important enough, one would suppose, to command some respectful attention. The point is not, whether other symbols may not be worthy also of regard in their place; but whether any form of belief, written or unwritten, can be considered evangelically sound and orthodox, which does not start in this plain rule, and grow forth from it as its normative ground and type. Can the Augsburg Confession; for instance, or the Westminster Confession, or the Heidelberg Catechism, be of greater symbolical authority at any point than the Creed, for the determination of the true and proper sense of Christianity; so that the last may be lawfully required to bend to any of the first, instead of its being held necessary that the order of subordination should fall the other way? In the relation here between the older confessionalism and the confessionalism of later times, which is to be considered first and which second; which must be taken for the foundation, and which for the superstructure, of the Christian scheme of faith? And so in regard to any unwritten judgment or conception of Christianity, which may be cherished in any quarter as a favorite sectarian phase of what is counted evangelical religion; the point for consideration comes up always in the same form. Can any such conception ever be allowed rightly to take precedence of that view of Christianity which is set before us in the ancient Creed, and which was received by the whole Christian world in the beginning, as the necessary, and only legitimate expression of what the Christian religion is in its first constituent principles and facts? Can any confessionalism,

in one word, written or unwritten, disown the Creed, ignore the Creed, make no conscious account of the Creed practically, as the basis of its opinions and teachings, and yet be, at the same time, evangelical, that is, answerable truly to the life and spirit of the Gospel? Can a Christian teacher, or a body of Christian teachers, occupy this position of broad indifference, or full antagonism, to what was held universally to be the absolutely binding *regula fidei* in the first ages, and yet deserve to be honored, notwithstanding, as sound in the faith and biblically orthodox?

With many in this incongruous predicament, we know, a ready and convenient escape from all difficulty is felt to be ever at hand, in the trite sophism which pretends to fall back at once on the Bible as the last rule of all right Christian belief. Here all our unchurchly sects fancy themselves to be planted on impregnable ground. They find it perfectly easy to stand forward with their diversified schemes of opinion, regardless of all primitive confessions and creeds, and to challenge the respect of the world for them as evangelical, on the simple ground of their having been drawn directly from the Scriptures and from no other source. Whether their schemes may agree strictly with the Apostles' Creed, they have not felt it necessary at all carefully to inquire; they have, on the whole, a sort of instinctive apprehension that they do not; but to what can that amount, in a case which confessedly refers itself at once to the higher rule of the Bible, to which every rule besides, it matters not how old, must be required of course to bend and yield? If there be any discrepancy between their faith and the proper historical sense of the Apostles' Creed, they are sorry for it; but it cannot be helped; they at all events, follow the Bible; and in such case, it is plain to see that if the Creed is not with them, the Creed must be wrong. With the ordinary sect spirit, setting all logic at defiance in this transparently stupid style, the less discussion one may have the better. We write for the thoughtful only; and such surely do not need to be told, that this pretended setting up of the Bible against the

Creed is a hypocritical sham of the poorest order, and nothing more. The question, as one would suppose any child might be able to see, regards not at all the authority of the Bible, but wholly and exclusively the interpretation of the Bible, the true and proper construction of what is to be considered its actual sense. It is not, as is sometimes shamelessly pretended: Must the Bible yield to the Creed, or the Creed to the Bible? but something very different indeed, namely this: Must the sense of the Bible as outlined in the Creed be regarded as its true sense, or may some other construction, some radically different way of understanding it, be allowed at pleasure to set this outline aside, and to make it of no force as a standard of Christian faith? Whether it be pretended to supersede the authority of the symbol in this way by a new written formulary, or by an unwritten scheme of Christianity professedly drawn fresh from the Bible, signifies nothing; all comes to the same thing in the end. In either case, it is the confessionalism of the Creed contradicted and opposed by another confessionalism, another theory of the Gospel, cast in a different mould and bearing a different type; and the only point to be settled is, which should be allowed to prevail over the other and to carry with it the highest authority, as a key for opening the full and proper sense of God's word. That the opposing interest should in any case affect to be ruled by no confessional authority whatever, and claim to be the direct voice of the Bible, would seem not to improve its position certainly, but to throw it rather into the worst possible form. A sect or party then, or it may be with just as much reason a single individual, is found setting up what after all can never be any thing better than a mere private opinion against the testimony of the general Church, spoken through ages; and gravely asking all mankind to be well assured that such private opinion is the veritable doctrine of Christ and his Apostles, which has a right, therefore, to be heard with implicit trust, in opposition it need be to all other professions of faith made since the world began. Simply to state the case, is to ex-

pose it. It is not easy to conceive of any pretension more outrageously absurd ; and yet, strange to say, the spirit of it meets us on all sides, forming, one may say, the reigning tone and temper of a very large part of our American Christianity at the present time.

Again we ask : Can any system of religion which thus sets up—not the Bible really—but its own construction of the Bible, in opposition to what is exhibited as being the true sense of the Bible in the Creed, in opposition to this form of sound words in which the Church has seen fit to express its apprehension of the fundamental truths of the Gospel from the beginning—can any such system of religion, we say, deserve to be acknowledged as evangelical and orthodox ?

We have a number of religious denominations in the modern Puritan world, which arrogate to themselves the title *Evangelical* as preëminently their own, for the very reason, as it would seem, that they agree in repudiating the churchly theory of Christianity presented in the Creed, as being in their mind contrary to the proper genius of the Gospel, and choose to substitute for this another and different theory altogether, extracted immediately, they pretend, from the Bible itself. However much they may differ among themselves, on other points, they are all happily of one and the same way of thinking here. They stand on the common ground of Puritanism as opposed to the old Catholic doctrine of the Church and the entire theology of the Apostles' Creed. Over against all this, they parade what they call the authority of the Bible, in other words, a general scheme of religion which they declare with great confidence to be the only true sense of the Bible ; and thus will have it, that this new rule of theirs shall be taken for the test of evangelical character the whole world over, so that whatever in any age or country is found not to agree with it, must for that very reason, be condemned, as contrary to true godliness and sound faith. Can any such pretension, we ask, be allowed to hold good ? Most certainly not ; unless we choose to turn all confessionalism into derision.

Here surely we have a right to join issue boldly with the whole system of unchurchly Puritanism, and to put it solemnly on its own apology and defence. Its points of difference within itself, are indeed of only minor significance; what it needs most of all is the vindication of its general or main cause, the position, namely, by which it stands arrayed as a whole against the primitive faith of the Christian world. Take it, for example, in the form of some one of its manifold religious "persuasions"; let us say, the wide spread numerically powerful sect of the Baptists. They reject infant baptism; a serious matter of controversy between them and other sects of like Puritanic mind; but this is not the beginning of their error, the deepest and most comprehensive form of their heterodox faith. To reach that, we must go back of all such heads of sectarian dispute, to what is in fact common ground for the disputing parties, their want of faith in the Church, their state of full opposition in this view to the Creed. The Baptists are heretical, because they are thus at variance with the foundation symbol of Christianity. Here, first of all, they are bound to give account of themselves before the tribunal of the Christian world. Other points, so far as they are concerned, mean nothing, are in truth mere impertinences and irrelevancies, till this root issue be fairly met and settled. As it is a matter of small moment what Unitarians may hold on other topics of theology, while they refuse to own the doctrine of the Trinity and the proper divinity of Christ; so is it also of little consequence what may be thought of the economy of the Church, at other points, its sacraments and forms of worship, its prerogatives and powers, by those who call in question, or at once deny, the very being of it, as it is made an article of faith in the Apostles' Creed. Why should breath be spent in discussing the question of infant baptism, where the whole conception of the Church giving it significance is quietly disowned as an antiquated superstition? Let the controversy fall back on this point, the true idea of the Church, as its proper beginning. The Baptists call themselves even

gical and orthodox, because they follow, as they tell us, the rule of the Gospel, in distinction from every other rule. We charge them with heresy, and pronounce them unevangelical and unbiblical, because they follow in reality only their own arbitrary and partial interpretation of the Scriptures, and refuse to find in them the sense in which they have been read by the orthodox faith of the Church through all ages. They are in broad conflict with the original symbol of Christianity, requiring the world to receive instead of it their own spiritualistic glossary everywhere, as the only sure and sufficient medium for getting at the true sense of God's word. Shall we be expected to yield to any such barefaced arrogance as this? No. The Baptists are neither evangelical nor orthodox. A main constituent of the Christian faith, one whole side indeed of the mystery of godliness as it was held by the universal Church in the beginning, finds no place in their system of belief. Their religion is not in the Bible, because it agrees not with the original *regula fidei* set before us in the Creed.

And so with Puritanism in general. Its cause here, as we have seen, is throughout the same. In discarding the old doctrine of the Church, in making Christianity to be a full and complete fact on the outside of the Church, it sets aside really the mysteries of the Church altogether; and by doing so brings in actually what must be considered a different Gospel from that which is preached by the Apostles' Creed, and which was held by the whole Church in the beginning to be the true glorious Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Is this to be evangelical? Is this to be orthodox, and sound in the faith as it was once delivered to the saints? Let the representatives of unchurchly Puritanism, who are never weary of repeating their stale insipidities on the subject of the Church, look this accusation fairly in the face, and meet it with some manly and honest answer if they can. It is high time, indeed, that attention were fixed more than it has been upon what must be held to be, in this whole controversy with Puritanism, the grand first matter in debate. The defenders of the interest should

be required first of all to come to some positive explanation of their own posture toward the original faith of the Christian world, as we have it expressed in the Creed. Till this be done, it is idle to talk with them on other points. Where there are no common premises, there can be of course no common conclusions, no such conclusions at least in one and the same sense. To what can it amount to argue sacramental questions, points of ecclesiastical polity, Church topics of any sort, with men who have yet to learn, or who at any rate do not feel themselves bound to acknowledge, "what be the first principles of the oracles of God," as these were supposed to be settled in past ages by the old Catholic standard of the Christian faith? If we are to have any argument at all with such men, it should be made to fall back at once to the beginning. All that we can do properly, is to charge home upon them the practical heresy of their whole theological position. Let them set themselves right with the Creed, before they pretend to dogmatize in any other direction.

The doctrine of the Church, we have seen, is not in the Creed in any merely outward and mechanical way. It appears there as a necessary part of the general mystery of faith, being absolutely required, just where it comes into view, to carry forward the significance and power of the Christian salvation, from what goes before to what follows after; being nothing less in truth than the connecting link between the mission of the Holy Ghost, and the full course of grace subsequently in the experience of believers. In this view, the article could not be dropped from the system, nor transposed in it to any different place, without marring its organic completeness throughout; as on the other hand the article itself, so torn from its connections, could no longer retain its own proper meaning as an object of faith. So it is indeed with all the articles of the Creed. The symbol is not so much a number of separate acts of faith brought together in a common confession, as one single act rather compassing at once the whole range of the new

creation from its commencement to its close. It has to do with its successive points, not as disjointed notions merely, but as concrete forces belonging to the constitution of a common living whole. Its articles are bound together thus, with indissoluble connection, from beginning to end. To believe any one part of it in its own sense, is implicitly at least to believe every other part; for the truth of every part stands in its relations to the whole system in which it is comprehended, and if it be not apprehended in these relations it cannot be said to be apprehended and believed in its own proper sense at all. In this way it is, that the article of the Church in the Creed is conditioned by the sense of the formulary at other points; as these other points are conditioned also by it again in their turn. There can be no true faith in the resurrection and glorification of Christ, and none in the consequent sending of the Holy Ghost, where it is not felt necessary to follow out still farther the objective progress of the mystery, and say: "I believe in the Holy Catholic Church;" and so, on the other hand, there can be no true faith in the Church, where it is not perceived to be the necessary outbirth in this way of these glorious antecedents, leading on to it, and making room for it in the world. It is not any and every way of owning the Church that can be said to satisfy the requirement of the Creed; as it is not enough for it either to own in any and every way the mission of the Holy Ghost.

The whole Creed carries with it thus from beginning to end an import, which accords in full with what it makes the Church to be in the order of salvation; and its articles can be rightly uttered, therefore, only as they are taken in real correspondence with this view. In other words, the theology of the symbol is churchly throughout. Its positions all hold only in that order of grace which involves the conception of the Church as the necessary fruit of its presence in the world. Sundered from this order, they cease to be altogether the objects of faith they are made to be in the system, and become instead mere matters of speculation and opinion. Hence it is, that the difficulty of Pu-

ritanism with the Creed is not confined by any means to the article of the Church itself, but extends to its universal form and structure ; so that even when any of its propositions may seem to be readily received, it is still always with some want of entire complacency in the particular way in which they are here articulated and spoken. Left to itself, Puritanism would choose to utter the same truths always in a different manner and with a different tone. To its reigning habit of theological thought, the organization of the Creed must ever appear to be unnatural and defective. Its own construction of Christianity may embrace, to a certain extent, the same christological and soteriological positions and terms ; but they will be found to have not just the same meaning ; there is a difference always in their drift and scope. Puritanism may lay great stress on its orthodoxy, in owning the doctrine of the Trinity, the true and proper Divinity of Christ, and the Atonement wrought out by his death ; and yet see no necessity whatever for carrying out all this to the issue which is ascribed to it in the Creed. It may acknowledge the Remission of Sins and the Resurrection of the Dead ; and yet see no dependence of either one or the other mystery on the supernatural constitution of the Church. But this is not to hold these articles in the sense of the Creed. The confessional concord in such case is in outward sound only, and nothing more. The orthodoxy of the Creed moves, from its first article on to its last, in that method of faith which requires and implies in its proper place the presence of the Holy Catholic Church ; and no point belonging to it can be held answerably to its general and only true sense, except as it is held in this way. No Gnostic apprehension of Christ's person, no merely spiritualistic view of his work of redemption, can satisfy its demands even in part. All must be taken in the form of an actual history, completing itself in the Church, "which is his body," running its course here as an order of grace in distinction from the order of nature, on to the glorious resurrection of the last day. So with all the benefits of the Christian salvation. They

are, in the view of the Creed, fruits of the Spirit, which are to be found only in the Church, the home of the Spirit. The life everlasting proclaimed by the Creed is a mystery, that depends wholly on the process of the new creation in Christ, which is here exhibited as the object of the Christian faith; and in this way it has place only within the economy of the Church, and can be truly believed therefore only under such view. The remission of sins, in the same way, is regarded as holding in the Church, and not on the outside of it. Men may dream of its being elsewhere; may take it for something that is possible in the general relation of man to his Maker; may claim to be evangelical and spiritual, just because they conceive of it in this spiritualistic way, and make it independent of all sacramental forms and limitations. But no such notion of the remission of sins amounts to what the article means in the Creed. There it is a mystery conditioned by the more general mystery of the Church; it comes through the obedience of faith yielded to this heavenly constitution, and finds its proper symbol, its real signature and pledge, in the sacrament of introduction into the Church; which is for this reason also the sacrament of regeneration, serving to translate its subjects from the power of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son, in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins. Hence the form given to the article in the Nicene Creed, "We confess one baptism for the remission of sins," adds nothing in fact to the sense of its shorter expression. To believe in the remission of sins at all in the sense of the old Christian faith, is to believe that it comes through baptism as the door of entrance into the Church.

As the Creed is constructed within itself, in the way now stated, on a theological scheme which is peculiarly its own, and which determines the true sense of it at every point, requiring all its articles to be understood in one manner only and not in another; so it is easy to see, how it must in this way also draw after it a corresponding con-

struction of all Christian doctrine beyond itself, imparting to it in like manner the power of its own principle and life. By its very conception, the formulary is archetypal and regulative for the whole world of Christian truth. It does not pretend to exhaust the necessary topics of divinity; it leaves room for a broad field of confessionalism beyond itself. But still, if it be indeed what it claims to be, a true scheme of what are to be considered the first principles of the oracles of God, it must necessarily rule the order and shape of all such additional belief throughout; in such way that no doctrine or article of faith shall deserve to be counted orthodox, except as it may stand in the bosom of the same scheme, growing forth from it, and carrying out the scope of it in a natural and regular way. All later confessionalism, to be genuine and valid, must have its genesis or birth from the Apostles' Creed, must refer itself to this as the real matrix of its growth and development. There must ever be a wide difference thus between a system of thought in which this order of faith is acknowledged and observed, and a system of thought in which it is disowned and disregarded; the theological system of the Creed and a theological system made to rest on any other basis; theology in the churchly and theology in the unchurchly form. A difference not confined to the immediate topics of the Creed itself, but extending through these to all topics; a difference not so much turning on single outward propositions, (though on this also to some extent,) as it is to be measured rather by the inward life of such propositions, the way in which they are understood, their spirit, their general purpose and aim. No Christian doctrine can be held under exactly the same form, within the system of the Creed, and on the outside of this system. Thus it is, that the authority of the symbol reaches out to all points of faith, and pervades with its presence the whole range of evangelical truth, making it necessary for every theological article to be held in full conformity with this fundamental rule, in order that it may have a right to be considered orthodox and true.

It is not enough, for example, to acknowledge the prophetic, priestly, and kingly offices of Christ, if they be set in no union with the true apprehension of his Mediatorial Person. It is not enough to maintain infant baptism, if we refuse to own at the same time the relation which the sacrament is made to bear in the Creed to the remission of sins. It is not enough to confess the inspiration of the Scriptures, if it be not with faith first in the Church; as though without such an apprehension of the Christian mystery as leads immediately on from Christ's glorification, and the sending of the Holy Ghost, to this great fact, it might be possible for any one, leaping over it as it were, and having no sense of its presence, to come in some other way altogether to firm faith in the Bible, as God's infallible word, and so through this afterwards to a full and complete scheme of evangelical religion. The Bible, great as it is in the scheme of Christianity, could not be substituted for the Church, in the place assigned to it as an article of faith, in the Creed, without violence to the whole order and sense of the Creed. In the view of this archetypal symbol, it comes rightly for all real faith, not before the Church, but after it. It is not the principle or beginning of Christianity, though it be truly its rule. It shines as a light from heaven *in the Church*, and was never intended to be a sufficient and final light for the world, as such, on the outside of the Church. Rationalism, Naturalism, Humanitarianism, of all shapes and types, taking it in such wrong view, however much stress they may affect to lay on its authority, never receive it truly as God's word, have no power to understand it, and in their use of it make it for themselves, as a matter of course, a mere *ignis fatuus*, all the world over, "blind leaders of the blind." It would be an appalling spectacle, only to see in fact what an amount of actual infidelity—disobedience to the faith—is sheltered in our time beneath the specious plea of honoring the Bible in this false way.

Take again the doctrine of justification by faith. It is not expressed in the Creed. This of itself makes nothing

against it; for the Creed does not pretend to set forth all Christian doctrines; it is an outline simply of what Christianity is in its primary, fundamental facts; leaving room for much to follow in the way of confessional superstructure. It is enough, if the doctrine before us be in the symbol by implication. But this at once serves, as we may readily see, to limit and define at the same time its proper conception. To be true at all, the doctrine must be held in union with the general system of the Creed, and not as something independent of it, and bearing to it only an outside relation. To conceive of justification by faith as a thing having no connection whatever with the objective world of grace brought into view by the Creed, a thing pertaining to the general idea of man's relations to God in the order of nature, instead of being bound in any way to the mysterious organization of the Church—the common error of the Puritanic mind—is to turn the doctrine into a fiction, which contradicts the symbol, and virtually sets aside its authority, bringing in indeed a new scheme of Christianity altogether. There can be no true faith, in the view of the Creed, which does not begin by owning and obeying the mystery of godliness proclaimed in its own articles; no true justification, which does not come from being set thus in real communication with the objective righteousness of Jesus Christ, as the power of a new creation actually present in the Church. No wonder, the theory which makes justification by faith to be a mere abstraction, and that also which resolves it into justification by fancy or feeling, find little or no satisfaction in the old Christian confessions. *Their* theology here, most assuredly, is not the theology of the Apostles' Creed.

What we have said, may be sufficient to show, how deep the distinction is between the churchly and the unchurchly schemes of theology, and how far in the end it is found to run. It regards not some points only, in the case of which there may be direct and formal opposition, but serves to qualify, in a very material way, the sense of all

points. No article, either of the Creed or of theology in general, can be just the same, for one who owns the old Catholic idea of the Church, and for one to whom that idea has come to seem an empty fiction. Doctrines appear under different relations, and so under different aspects, as apprehended from the one stand-point or from the other; and even where they may seem to have the same sound, are still felt some how to carry with them always a different signification and force.

Let any one compare, in this view, the theology of the old Church Fathers, with the theology of modern New England, in what is commonly regarded as its most orthodox form. How the two methods vary continually from one another, hardly ever presenting the same topics in the same way! The Trinity, the Incarnation, all Christ's offices and acts, the authority of the Scriptures, Baptism and the Lord's Supper, regeneration, justification, and sanctification, faith, hope, charity, the resurrection, and the life to come—all are made to have a meaning in the one case, which is not just what they are felt to mean in the other. The two schemes are not strung on the same key, and they sound accordingly no note in common. Each has its own christology, its own soteriology, its own eschatology; in one word, its own whole atmosphere of thought, and habit of faith, so sharply defined and strongly marked, that it is impossible to avoid some sense of embarrassment, some feeling of strangeness, in passing out of one into the other. For one brought up in the Puritan habit of religion, it requires a new education, to be able either to understand or appreciate properly the Christianity of the ancient Fathers; as on the other hand we may be very sure, that any one of these returning to the earth would need to undergo a full revolution of thought, before he could feel himself at all at home in the bosom of Puritanism, or find in it any aliment whatever for faith and piety. We have in the case, in fact, two Christianities, two radically different schemes of religion, two whole systems of divinity that never move in exactly the same line.

So much hinges on this great question of the Church, which to the view of many seems so far away from the true-central life of the Gospel. In comparison with it, as we have said before, the ordinary points of denominational controversy, the shibboleths that divide one unchurchly sect from another, are only of partial, superficial interest. Such sectarian confessionalism, with all its differences, holds notwithstanding for the most part in a common system or scheme of faith, and rests in substantially the same general conception of Christianity. To pass over from one branch of it to another involves no violent revolution. It is simply to go out of one compartment of a wide and spacious mansion into another. The mansion remains still the same. But the question : Church or no Church in the old Catholic sense, is of a widely different nature, having to do with the very consciousness of religion itself, and determining its universal order, method, and form. Its home is in the depths of Christianity, far down beneath the issues from which spring the ordinary divisions of denominations and sects.

In view of such a generic difference holding between the two systems, the churchly scheme of Christianity and the unchurchly, the theology of the Creed and its opposite—a difference which lies so deep and reaches so far—it becomes a matter of peculiar interest to determine precisely what its whole character signifies and means. In one case, as we have seen, the Church is taken to be an essential constituent of the mystery of godliness, while in the other it is considered an arrangement belonging to it only in an outward adventitious way. Here we get back to the last sense of the Church Question ; which is found to be at the same time strangely implicated with the right construction of the Creed, conditioning in truth the way in which all its articles are to be understood. For not only does the Creed affirm the doctrine of the Church, making it a necessary part of Christianity, and so a necessary object of faith ; but it throws the entire scheme of Christianity into

such a shape and form, from first to last, as imperatively requires the doctrine in this sense, and cannot be satisfied without it. The Creed is constructed throughout, both in its antecedent and consequent articles, on that view of Christianity which involves the idea of the Church in the form now stated, and makes it necessary for it to come into view just where it does in the onward flow of that good confession. This does not imply, however, that the Creed starts from the idea of the Church as its own proper principle. That which is the first question in regard to the doctrine of the Church itself, namely, what place is to be ascribed to it in the conception of Christianity, is not just the first question in regard to the theological system in which it is comprehended as a necessary article of faith. When we have said, therefore, that the Church is made in the Creed to be of the essence of Christianity, and that all the articles of the symbol are so framed as to shut faith up to this conclusion, and that it leads on thus to an entire theology of answerable form and complexion throughout—it remains still to ask: What then is that peculiarity of doctrine in the Creed, that distinguishing quality of faith, back of its doctrine of the Church, which calls this forth in its order, gives to it all its force, and imparts what we call a churchly character to the universal scheme of religion into which it enters as an organic part? What is the root or beginning of the broad difference, which reigns between the Catholic Christianity of the first ages and the Puritanic Christianity of modern times, between the theology which breathes the spirit of the Creed and the theology which breathes a different spirit, between the churchly construction of the Gospel and the unchurchly? It is not easy to conceive of a theological inquiry more interesting than this, or more worthy of being followed out with right study to a right answer.

Were we called upon to give in a word the distinguishing peculiarity of the Creed, in the view suggested by the inquiry, we should place it in the *historical* character it as-

signs to the Christian salvation, regarded as a supernatural process of grace, in opposition to every scheme which resolves it into a matter of mere speculative thought. Its doctrine of the Church falls back on its doctrine of Christ; and this is made to include, from first to last, the conception of a real union between the divine and the human, the life of God and the life of man, in the person of the Mediator, carrying along with it the work of redemption, as the process of a new creation in the bosom of the old, onward to the end of time.

In the Creed, as in the New Testament, Christianity has its last ground in the mystery of the Ever Blessed and Glorious Trinity; which is exhibited as an object for faith, however, not so much in the light of a doctrine, as in the light of a fact, opening the way for the revelation which God has been pleased to make of himself through the mystery of the Incarnation. This forms, accordingly, an act of self-manifestation on the part of God, by which he is to be regarded as coming into the world in a sense in which he had not been in it before, for the purpose of redeeming and saving men from their sins. The Word became flesh. That is the beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ; and power to own and confess it, not as a dogma merely, but as a simple historical fact, is the beginning of all faith in the proper evangelical sense of the term. The beginning of all heresy, on the other hand, lies in the open or virtual denial of this great mystery. Hence St. John's memorable touch-stone for distinguishing true Christianity from that which is spurious and false. "Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh," he tells us, "is of God; and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God; and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world." The spirit of antichrist, in this way, is the rationalistic temper of the natural mind, which substitutes for the mystery of the incarnation in its proper form a mere notional construction of Christ's person, in which, after all, no real

historical union of the divine nature with the human is allowed to have place ; setting up thus in opposition to the true Christ a false shadowy image, a mere spiritualistic phantom, which is made to counterfeit his name and usurp his place. Over against all such rationalistic spiritualism, the Creed makes full earnest with the criterion of St. John. It takes up and carries out in its own simple, historical way, that notable confession of Peter: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God;" in reference to which our Saviour 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 merit of Peter's faith stood in its power to break over the natural order of the world, so as to see and acknowledge in the person of Christ, there actually before him, the presence of a new and higher form of existence, joining the nature of God with the nature of man in a way transcending all common understanding and thought. Thou, Jesus of Nazareth, it could say—whom we know to be in all respects a real man like ourselves, and no spirit merely in human show—Thou, the Son of Mary, art at the same time the Son of the Most High God, and as such the Messiah, the true Saviour of the world. Such precisely is the confession, which forms the burden of the Apostles' Creed. Its theme may be said to be throughout, "Christ come in the flesh." In that fact, the objective mystery of godliness (1 Tim. 3: 16), it sees the whole fulness of salvation, the entire economy of redemption; and it lays itself out, accordingly, to set it forth in its necessary conditions and consequences, under a purely historical view, as the proper substance of Christianity, the one grand object of all true Christian faith. So apprehended, the Gospel is in no sense theoretical, but supremely practical. It is the presence of a supernatural fact in the world, confronting men under an outward form, carrying in itself objectively the powers of the world to come, and challenging actual submission to its claims in such view as the only way in which it is possible to be saved. Faith has to do in the case, first of all, not with

any doctrines which may be supposed to flow from the fact, but with the fact itself as a simple matter of history ; the history being, however, at the same time supernatural, out of the whole ordinary course of things in the world, and requiring, therefore, a very different kind of belief from that which is needed to take up the facts of history in its common human form. It is a great thing—too great for the reach of mere natural thought—to believe truly that Christ has come in the flesh ; that Jesus was no mere man attended by the extraordinary inspiration of the Almighty, according to the old Ebionitic view ; and yet no mere shadow either, according to any of the old Gnostic theories ; but that in him the Word became actually and enduringly incarnate for us men and for our salvation.

On this supernatural fact, the Creed fastens its whole attention, referring it to its necessary origin, and following it out steadily to its necessary results, all in the way of simple historical apprehension and conception. Christ, the Son of God, we are required to believe, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man. He suffered, died, descended into hades. But it was not possible that he should be held under the power of death. He rose again ; he ascended on high, leading captivity captive, and having all power given unto him in heaven and in earth. All this served only to prepare the way for his kingdom in the world, through the mission of the Holy Ghost, his great ascension gift, and the constitution of the Church, which is declared by St. Paul to be his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all, and with which he has himself promised to be present always to the end of time. In the Church, accordingly, as distinguished from the natural constitution of the world, the new order of grace brought to pass by the victory of Christ over sin, death, and hell, runs its course from age to age, in the salvation of all true believers. "We confess one baptism for the remission of sins ; we look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come."

The peculiarity of the old Christian Creeds, is their way of grasping and following out the historical realness of the mystery of the incarnation, so as to make full earnest with the objective, continually enduring character of the new order of life it has served to bring into the world. In this respect, it falls in with what appears to have been the reigning tone of the Apostolic preaching, as we are made acquainted with it in the Acts of the Apostles. The same peculiarity runs through all the theological literature of the Ancient Church, as it entered also into its universal life. The object of faith is made to be always Christ in the flesh, Christ coming into the world, working, dying, rising again, conquering, reigning, carrying forward his kingdom in the most real way to the end of time. The whole Gospel is regarded as being in this way a *mystery*; not in the sense of an unfathomable, incomprehensible doctrine merely, but in the light of a fact not resolvable into the ordinary constitution of the world, which has nevertheless at a certain time entered into it, from the depths of eternity, under the most actual form, serving to bring out the inmost purpose of God in reference to man; the "mystery of godliness" (1 Tim. 3: 16); the mystery hid from ages and generations, but now manifested to the saints (Col. 1: 26); the mystery which from the beginning of the world was hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ, to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord (Eph. 3: 9-11); the mystery of grace, which was given us by God's purpose in Christ Jesus before the world began, but is now "made manifest"—the purpose having passed into supernatural act—by the "appearing" of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel; which in such view is nothing more nor less than his own glorious advent into the world creating and bringing to pass what it serves thus to reveal (2 Tim. 1: 9-10). Such

an apprehension of the Gospel involves, and draws after it necessarily, the old Catholic idea of the Church, as it is presented to us in the Creed.

All heresy, so far as Christianity is concerned, starts in the form of unbelieving opposition to this mystery, refusing to see and acknowledge in Christ the objective, abiding presence of the new creation—the world of grace in full parallel with the world of nature—under its own proper historical character and form. Wherever it may end, it is sure to begin always, consciously or unconsciously, in a wrong view of the Incarnation. It does not lay hold of the fact, with any just sense of its terms and conditions, so as to be borne along by the outward authority of it in its own direction—the only true conception of faith; but turns it rather into a mere matter of speculative contemplation, by which it comes to be at last nothing more in truth than a thought or notion in the mind itself, substituted for the fact it pretends to believe. The mind thus does not pass over really into the objective sphere of the christological revelation, as it is in its own nature, but remains rationalistically bound all the time to its simply natural order of existence, fetching the mystery down to this, as it were, instead of rising above it by its means. The result is such a separation of the natural from the supernatural in Christ, and so in Christianity throughout, as will not allow them to come to any organic, abiding, and truly historical union whatever. Broad exemplifications of this false way of thinking we have in the strange dreamings of the old Gnostics, and afterwards again in the more subtle errors of Nestorius and Eutyches, by the coming round in opposite directions to the same end—such a sublimation of Christ's divinity, as left no room for the conception of his true and proper humanity in one and the same person, and served thus to transfer the entire mystery from the region of real outward history to the region of unreal inward imagination and fancy. These ancient heresies have been long since surmounted and condemned by the orthodox theology of

the Church. But the spirit that gave birth to them, which is nothing else than the natural indisposition of the human mind to confess that "Christ is come in the flesh," still lives, we may be sure, and will continue to do so, and to make itself felt as a "false spirit," to the end of time. It is a spirit too, which may be readily recognized always, by being brought into comparison with what we have just found to be the true spirit of Christianity as it breathes in the Creed. The distinguishing peculiarity of the Creed is its sense of the actual, the objective, the outwardly historical, in the mystery of the Word made flesh, the regard it has throughout to the enduring realness of the new creation brought to pass in the world by Christ Jesus. Any system then which refuses to conform inwardly to this rule of faith, must be distinguished in the nature of the case by the opposite principle, a tendency, namely, to look away from the objective realness of the new creation in Christ, and to substitute for this a mere theoretical apprehension, by which the mystery is lifted out of its own necessary historical conditions, and made to resolve itself at last, more or less, into a scheme of doctrinal abstractions.

In this way we reach what must be considered the fundamental difference, between the churchly and the unchurchly schemes of Christianity, the Catholic order of faith and the Puritanic, the theology of the Creed and all theology besides.

Here it is then, that the full theological significance of the doctrine of the Church comes finally into view. Entering as it does organically into the construction of the Creed, it becomes necessarily a test or criterion by which to determine the quality of all Christian belief, as either corresponding or not corresponding with the proper sense of this symbol. The idea of the Church presented in the Creed is inseparably joined with its general conception of the historical nature of Christianity; proceeds with necessary development, we may say, from its way of looking at Christ's person and work. Not to see the force of the ide

then, and to have no sense of its necessity, is to stand as a matter of course not in this habit or method of faith at all, but in some other form of belief altogether; which, in such case, cannot fail to labor under the general christological defect, that is found to characterise necessarily any theological system bearing a different type from the Creed. An unchurchly spirit, in other words, is in reference to Christianity always to a greater or less extent, a Gnostic spirit, tending to sublimate the true historical character of the Gospel into a spiritualistic abstraction, and causing it to become thus a doctrine or theory rather than the presence of a perpetual fact, a subject of opinion rather than an object of faith. The charge, we are aware, is serious; but it is not made lightly or at random; the truth of it is easily established, we think, both from the nature of the case itself, properly understood, and from actual observation.

It matters not, that those who are under the power of this spirit may profess, and believe themselves really to hold, sound christological views according to the standard of the Creed, rejecting and condemning the heresies which struck at the true constitution of Christ's person in the first Christian ages. The soul of an error is not so much bound to its first outward forms, that it must necessarily die and pass away when these come to an end. It may migrate into new bodies, and thus walk the earth as before. Particularly must this be the case with the error now before us, which St. John declares to be the root or salient point of all contradiction to the great mystery of godliness revealed in Christ, and which cannot fail in such view, therefore, to make itself felt as long as this contradiction shall last, counterfeiting the mystery, and setting up its own mock image, (the "mystery of iniquity" shall we call it?), in its room and place. Conquered in one form, it may be expected to appear still again in some other form, more refined it may be and plausible, but involving always in the end the same sense. It is not enough to confess that Christ has come in the flesh, in the terms of the Creed—"conceived by the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin

Mary"—if the confession break down afterwards with any part of what necessarily follows from this fact, as we have it carried out in the same rule of faith. For the objective realness of any fact includes its necessary connections, its historical antecedents and consequents, no less than the naked fact itself; and to be believed at all truly—to be apprehended as a reality and not as a mere dream or fancy—it must be so believed that these shall be owned and acknowledged at the same time. To deny the supernatural birth of Christ on the one hand, or to call in question the truth of his resurrection on the other, would be to turn the whole mystery of the Incarnation into a myth, though it were pretended never so strongly in the same breath to accept it as true. And so with the points that follow in the Creed; if indeed they *do* follow in the actual order of the mystery itself, as they are made to stand forth consecutively here in the order of faith. They must be believed, in order that there may be any full historical faith in the advent of Jesus Christ into the world; and not to believe them, is virtually to make such faith null, by turning its object into a Gnostic fiction, whatever pains may be taken to use at the same time, as far as they go, the old orthodox terms in reference to Christ's person. In the system of the Creed, the article of the Church is made to stand prominent among these points; and the assumption is, of course, that the coming of Christ in the flesh, regarded in its proper historical view, leads on to this in the way of necessary consequence, just as really as it draws after it his glorification at the right of God and the mission of the Holy Ghost. Not to have faith in the Church then—not to have any sense of its historical necessity in the general mystery of Christianity—as it implies in the first place a different conception of the Gospel from that which is presented in the Creed, involves also, in the second place, necessarily, a want of harmony to the same extent with what we have seen to be the distinguishing peculiarity of this old rule of faith, the stress, namely, which it lays throughout on the historical realness of the Incarnation. As the christology

of the Creed, the way in which it looks at Christ's person and confesses his coming in the flesh, involves in the end the idea of the Church, it follows, as a matter of course, that those who can feel their faith complete, their religious system round and full, without it, must have the mystery of the Incarnation before their minds in some different way. From the nature of the case thus the unchurchly spirit, not falling in fully with the sound christological sense of the Creed, is found to carry with it always some portion of the leaven of Gnosticism.

It requires only small observation, to verify this conclusion in actual life. The unchurchly spirit prevails largely in the religious world at the present time, under all imaginable varieties of form ; and it is easy enough to see, that just in proportion to its power, it is everywhere a spirit unfavorable to a sound and just apprehension of the mystery of the Incarnation, regarded in the historical light of the Creed. Its tendency is universally towards such a spiritualism here, as goes finally to remand the mystery from the world of fact into the world of fancy, causing it to dissolve thus into thin air. In one direction, this amounts in fact to an open giving up of the higher nature of Christ altogether, as among Socinians and Unitarians; in which case, it is especially worthy of notice, how completely the idea of the Church is made to perish at the same time. Infidelity in such form may pretend still to honor Christianity, and to make high account of the Bible ; but it can never be churchly. There is an inward contradiction plainly, between its rationalistic doctrine of Christ and the old Catholic doctrine of the Church. The first does not lead over in any way to the last, (as in the Creed) but excludes it ; showing that there is a natural affinity thus between the want of faith in the Church and the want of faith in Christ. But the spiritualism which is opposed to a just view of Christ's person may take another form ; not denying his higher nature, but on the contrary so exalting this in thought as to sink out of sight more or less the historical verity of his lower nature ; and it is in this character more

particularly, that it claims attention and observation, as going hand in hand with the unchurchly spirit in the modern religious world.

Of this we have a striking example in the history of the Quakers. Their Christianity was from the start unchurchly in the lowest degree—owning no dependence on outward ministrations, outward sacraments, outward ordinances and arrangements of any kind. It repudiated in fact the universal conception of the Church in the old Catholic sense; while it professed, notwithstanding, the highest veneration for Christ, and affected to make more of his supernatural presence and power than the whole Christian world besides. But it is easy enough now to see, that this pretension was vain; and that what the system honored in such view was not so much the real historical Christ of the Gospel, as a Gnostic fiction rather made to bear his name. With the progress of time, the error has worked itself out more and more into view—its sublimated conception of Christ resolving itself into the “inward light” of mere natural reason—until it seems ready now at last to fall over into the arms of open infidelity.

In the case of other unchurchly sects, the want of a sound historical sense of the mystery of the Incarnation, is no less certain, although it may not be so immediately and broadly apparent. One general evidence of it is found in the simple fact itself, before noticed, that they have so little complacency in the Creed; as feeling it to be in some way opposed to their own habit of thought, not merely in its doctrine of the Church, but in its whole theological construction. The symbol has for them a certain peculiarity throughout, which is felt to be mysteriously interwoven with the presence of this article in its place, and for this reason it is not to their taste. But what this peculiarity is we have now seen. It is nothing more nor less than the objective, historical light in which the fact of Christ's coming in the flesh is made to stand in this ancient rule of faith, imparting a corresponding character to its whole conception of Christianity. Out of this way of believing

in the Incarnation, grows forth its doctrine of the Church, and also its general churchly bearing and tone. Want of sympathy thus with the ecclesiastical spirit of the Creed, is in truth want of sympathy at last with its christological spirit. In having no taste for the formulary then, those unchurchly sects show themselves in full proportion to their unchurchliness, estranged from its historical apprehension of the Christian mystery, and so under the power of a faith which must ever be, as differing from this, more or less Gnostically spiritualistic in its character. This is the true secret at bottom of their silent prejudice against the Creed, as it serves to explain also the true nature of their bad understanding generally with the Christianity of the first ages.

Still farther practical proof, ample and full, of the charge here preferred against the unchurchly spirit, as it reigns among Puritanic sects of the better class, is to be found in the prevailing character of their entire theology and religious life. The Church system of the Creed, we have already seen, not only rules the sense of its own articles throughout, but reaches through these to all Christian doctrine and practice, producing a style of Christianity which is very different from all that may exist under any other form. The principle of this difference, it now appears, is not just the doctrine of the Church itself in the form in which it is here made to be a necessary part of the Christian faith, but the Christology which lies behind it—the peculiar way in which the coming of Christ in the flesh is here apprehended and confessed. This it is—this historical apprehension of the great fact of the Incarnation in distinction from all Gnostic spiritualism—that calls out the article of the Church, among other mysteries, in its place, and communicates a churchly spirit at the same time to the whole symbol, and to the universal religious system also into which the symbol naturally runs. It follows, therefore, that all religious thinking which is not ruled by this spirit must stand, so far as that is the case, in a view of the Incarnation, which fails to make full earnest with the objective historical realness of the fact in the way of

the Creed ; the result of which must be a certain tinge of Gnosticism, extending in the end to its whole scheme of faith. The peculiar genius of the unchurchly system of Christianity in this way, as distinguished from the theological spirit of the Creed, will be found on examination to penetrate every part of its doctrinal and practical life. Any such examination, however, would amount to a comparison of the system in its details with the opposite form of Christianity, a comparative view of the Catholic and Puritanic schemes of religion in particulars, such as we have no mind to enter upon at the present time.

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ART. IV.—BAPTISM.

A Disputation concerning Baptism, by ANTHONY WALEUS, Doctor and Professor of Theology in the University of Leyden, A. D , 1724.

CIRCUMCISION was unquestionably deemed of immense importance—so much so, that the LORD sought to slay even Moses because he had neglected that rite with regard to his son, (Ex. 4: 24).

And can we suppose that Baptism may now be neglected with impunity by a Christian parent? It certainly claims at his hands the greatest regard.

In the early days of the Reformation, it was highly thought of—a result of the intelligent and correct views of it, that were then entertained and advocated, as may be seen in the subjoined specimen, which the reader is confidently assured, will amply repay perusal.

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I. S. D.