

for any use to which we may please to put it, for example, as a text-book of science, or a horoscope of the future." We weaken rather than strengthen its authority when we attribute to it more than it claims for itself, or, it is necessary to add, when in our interpretations we apply to it methods which we would not apply to any other book.

It has been inevitable that much should be omitted, or lightly touched on, which might seem to have needed discussion. Questions about the Canon of Holy Scripture, about methods of interpretation, about Biblical Criticism in general were close at hand seeking admission, but time forbade their inclusion. My endeavour has been to confine myself strictly to the special part of the subject set before me—Holy Scripture as the final authority in faith and conduct, considered with reference to prospects of Home Reunion.



The Two Creeds.

By the Rev. H. B. GOODING, M.A., *Rector of Gatcombe, Isle of Wight.*

“THE Apostles’ Creed, as the Baptismal symbol; and the Nicene Creed as the sufficient statement of the Christian Faith.”

This is the second of the four corner stones which the Lambeth Conference of 1888 recommended as essential in any scheme of reunion between the Church of England and other Christian bodies. The words used remind us of an early chapter in Church History. Two kinds of creed can be distinguished, gradually taking shape, in response to two needs which became manifest at an early period of Christian experience. Firstly, there was the need, which must have been felt from the very beginning, of having some simple but definite profession of faith which every individual would be required to make before admission into the Kingdom of Jesus Christ which was being founded on earth. In origin the Apostles’ Creed was of this nature; and, although expanded in course of time and extended in use, it has always remained *the* Baptismal Creed. Secondly, it was not long before the growth of heretical opinions made it necessary that Christians should have some fuller profession of faith which would serve to exclude such errors. The

so-called Nicene Creed is the example of such a profession of faith hammered out to meet this need.

Now these two needs, from the time when they were first felt, have never lost their force. And it is well that the words, in which the resolution of the Lambeth Conference is framed, should bring them to our notice—seeing that, always operative, they become still more urgent when reunion between our branch of the Church and other bodies is contemplated. For, in the first place, there must be some formula of admission to be used and adhered to by all the members of the enlarged body. This should of course be as simple as possible. In this connexion we may notice in passing that the Lambeth Conference gives a right lead in omitting the Athanasian Creed. I am sure we all value it, for its history and as being an able attempt to express our faith. But it is evident that if we are to bring reunion with other Christian bodies within the range of practical achievement, we must keep rigidly to essentials stated in as simple a form as possible. On the other hand when we have eliminated everything but essentials our statement of these must be quite clear and definite. There should be no doubt about what is expected of those who are baptized in any “part” of the enlarged and united body.

Again, the danger lest certain lines of thought and certain kinds of speculation should prove to be subversive of essentials of the Faith, just as it is at all times present, will need to be especially guarded against when two or more bodies of people propose to come together who although sharing in the common name “Christian” have for long acted independently of and divergingly from each other. Once more we must limit ourselves to essentials, but about them we must be perfectly clear, if we are to produce union and not sow the seeds of worse divisions in the future.

Now the Apostles’ Creed and the Nicene Creed, in point of origin and the long test of subsequent history, definite as they are and yet on the whole simple, do, it would seem, really meet the two needs mentioned above. But there is another aspect of the matter which will also come to the front in any attempt at reunion. It is the question of interpretation. It has been said that we need definiteness. And yet from the nature of the case, any attempt to state our Faith in an absolutely definite form is impossible; for we are trying to state spiritual truths in human forms of expres-

sion which are inadequate for the purpose. There will always be what we may call a "symbolical" element in our Creeds. To take one example, it is evident that such an expression as "sitteth at the right hand of God" cannot be taken literally of spiritual Beings. This element in our Creeds constitutes a real difficulty. Who is to say how far their language generally may be taken symbolically? Who is to decide on the interpretation of each clause and lay down its exact meaning? Is there such an official interpretation of details? A very superficial acquaintance with the theological literature of the present day will suggest that as a matter of fact in the Church of England a considerable amount of freedom is allowed to members in their interpretation of particular clauses of the Creed. This at least suggests that we ought not to require from other bodies more than a conscientious adherence to the truths which the Creeds stand for, leaving some room for differences of individual interpretation in details.

If we take up this attitude, it immediately becomes important that we should consider what are the great truths to which acceptance of the Creed will bind all alike, in spite of a certain measure of freedom of interpretation. I cannot pretend to do this myself. My purpose will be served if what I say provokes discussion.

(A) If we turn to the Creeds, we find that in each there are three divisions; and a statement about the godhead is spread over these three parts. We may take the Nicene Creed as being the fuller of the two. We say then that we believe (a) in one God the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth And of all things visible and invisible; (b) And in one Lord Jesus Christ, etc. . . . being of one substance with the Father; (c) And in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life, Who proceedeth from the Father and the Son.

(1) Now it is evident that any one accepting this Creed must believe in a God Who is a personal being, not a vague force or abstraction: a God moreover who is the source of all things and so closely connected with them that He interferes in human history (by sending His Son).

(2) Any one accepting this Creed must believe in the Trinity. Taking the three parts of the Creed, we have three separate distinct persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit presented to us. But the Creed carefully defines that the Son is as much God as the Father "Very God of very God . . . being of one substance with the

Father." So too of the Holy Spirit "Who proceedeth from the Father and the Son, Who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified." In short, the Creed says explicitly that there is one God and three Persons. No honest interpretation of the language of the Creed can fail to involve belief in the Trinity. It is clear therefore that union with a Non-Trinitarian body is excluded.

But with regard to some of the expressions, in which the Creed sets out this belief as to the nature of the Godhead, there may be room for some difference of interpretation. The word *ὁμοούσιος*, as we know, caused a great deal of searching of heart in ancient times. The centuries that have elapsed since then have not minimized the difficulty. How exactly are we to think of the phrase "of one *substance* with the Father." We see through a glass darkly. Surely we must leave the interpretation to individual consciences and require only a loyal belief in the "Three Persons in One God."

We might raise similar questions with regard to "sonship" and "procession." We have a basis for these in Scripture. And we do mean something very real by the different relationships in which we say that the Persons of the Trinity stand to each other. But we must realize that we do not mean just what we ordinarily mean when we use such terms of human relationships.

It may be convenient, now that we are considering the question of interpretation, to take certain other clauses of the Creed out of their order. *E.g.*, "I believe in the Resurrection of the body" (assuming that this, not "Flesh," is to be the word used). "Flesh and Blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God," says S. Paul. Such a statement at once throws a cloud of uncertainty around the word "body" in the Creed. Evidently it is not the human body just as it is now. If not, what is it? What do we mean by the word? Still more important—what are we expected to mean? There does not seem to be an official interpretation binding on every one. We must be content to leave some measure of interpretation to private consciences: keeping the words as a safeguard against certain errors, *e.g.*, Pantheism and a failure to conceive of the redeeming work of our Lord as extending to every element of Man.

To take one more example, perhaps if we go behind the clause "I believe in the forgiveness of sins," or "I acknowledge one

baptism for the remission of sins," we shall find different ideas and forms of expression with regard to our Lord's redemptive work among different bodies and schools of thought. Yet on this at least all must agree that it is through Him and Him alone, and in connexion with His death, that forgiveness of sins is possible.

(B) So far we have been thinking mainly of the more dogmatic elements of the Creeds. But Christianity is essentially a historic religion, I mean, in the sense that it is based on certain historical facts. The dogmatic and theological clauses in the Creeds are an attempt to draw out the meaning of the historical facts: the facts come first. To omit or to minimize or undermine any of them when attempting to build up a Christian body, would be disastrous, because it would be building on insecure foundations. The importance therefore of the historical clauses in the Creed for our present purpose is evident. The very history of the Creeds reminds us of this. We know how the emphasis secured in such clauses as "was made man," "was crucified also under Pontius Pilate," "suffered and was buried," has been a safeguard against various erroneous theories of only apparent death, etc. We must therefore lay especial stress on these clauses.

I suppose, however, that the majority of these statements would be accepted as they stand. But there are two which the course of recent speculation has brought into prominence, viz., "was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary," and "the third day He rose again from the dead." Must we not, it may be urged, concede a certain freedom of interpretation with regard to these clauses, if we concede it with regard to other clauses of the Creed? Now it is evident that there is a difference between such a clause as "was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary" and "sitteth on the right hand of God." The latter is an attempt to express something which lies outside the sphere of our experience in the best way we know how. The former, though running counter to our ordinary experience, claims to be an event which has come within the totality of our experience. The only question in regard to it is, Did it really happen or not?—just as with regard to any other fact of history. In accepting the Creed we mean that we do accept the evidence for it and are prepared to believe it. We must be quite clear about this. But, of course, in saying this, we do not close the door to speculation as to how "Virgin Birth" is possible,

or how Our Lord's human body rose again, any more than we could refuse to inquire how He healed the sick or stilled the waters of the lake. These are legitimate questions which we can and ought to pursue. But we do insist that the attempt at interpretation should stop short of touching the "historicity" of the event: we allow explanation: we cannot (if we accept the Creeds) allow events to be explained away.

The whole question of interpretation is very difficult and needs much careful thought. The instances taken above are only meant to suggest the importance of re-emphasizing the historical facts stated in the Creeds, at the present time in general and especially when the widening of our boundaries is contemplated.

(C) There is one other clause of the Creeds which calls for special notice. We profess (if we combine the words of the two Creeds) a belief in One Holy Catholic Apostolic Church. Time will not allow any full and adequate consideration of what is involved in the word Church. But, for our present purpose, it may be useful to remind ourselves of S. Paul's description of the Church as the Body of Christ. For:—

1. This in the first place implies "oneness." There can only be one body. In the Epistle to the Ephesians, S. Paul labours, through a variety of phrases and expressions, to emphasize the fact of the oneness and the unity of the body. But the word body also implies diversity. It is never safe to press a comparison too far; but S. Paul himself in the first Epistle to the Corinthians points out that the unity manifested in the body is a unity composed of differences.

Moreover, if we ask what is the nature, the essence of this unity which pervades the whole body, it is simply "being in union with Christ"; or if we prefer to express it in a slightly different way, we find that at the very beginning of the Church's history in the book of the Acts, emphasis is laid on the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. So the Church is called Holy. We may distinguish, it is true, between those who are really in union with Christ, and those who though nominally members of the Society, do not as a matter of fact share in this union. But the aim which is set before the body is that every member should make real the holiness attributed to all.

When we bear these principles in mind two questions naturally

occur to us. (1) Where we see signs among any body of men that this union with Christ, the life of the Spirit, is being realized, can we, for other reasons, refuse them a place in the Church, the one Body of Christ? (2) In view of the manifold divisions amongst Christians, together with the clear evidence of the working of God's Spirit amongst various disunited societies, ought we not to keep steadfastly before ourselves the fact that the unity of the Church is like the unity of body, based on differences? That the one Church is Catholic, not only because it is world-wide and offers the one true faith to all men, but also because it must be comprehensive, lest it miss any part of the one truth.

2. What has been said above, must not be taken as implying that outward forms are of little or no value. In so far as the Church is a Society established among men, it must have some definite structure and express its unity in outward forms. The word Apostolic reminds us that we must go back to Apostolic times. When we do so we find at least three definite forms through which the unity of the Church finds expression: (a) There is one teaching and one faith. It is evident that every body of men, every individual who is in union with Jesus Christ, must believe in the Incarnation, the death, the redeeming work, the resurrection, the forgiveness of sins, the Holy Spirit, etc. In short there must be a definite summary of essential beliefs such as our creeds attempt to provide. (b) Secondly, we find in many ways that the spiritual is closely connected with the material. The establishment of the Sacraments seems to fit in with this side of our experience. Thus S. Paul endeavours to show how Baptism really brings us into union with Jesus Christ and gives us a share in what He did. In a similar way he refers to the Lord's Supper in 1 Corinthians, "The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? Seeing that we who are many are one bread, one body: for we all partake of the one bread." (c) Thirdly, the unity of the body is from the first expressed through a definite form of government. "We have no such custom, neither the Churches of God" (1 Cor. xi. 16). In the New Testament the exact details are not clear. But we can trace an outline which is definite but at the same time flexible. (a) On the one hand there is room for more than one kind of ministry; (b) on the other there are clear traces of the three-fold order which for centuries was a visible expression of unity all

over the world and to which we have always held. It is evident that in any scheme of reconstruction, due weight must be allowed to both these facts. But the further history of this subject and its bearing on the question of Reunion must fall within the province of the papers on Episcopacy.



Baptism.

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“**A**N age which has its face to the future, and in which men are full of plans for the welfare of the world, is not an age that has lost its faith. Its temper of mind is constructive, it is eager for new institutions, keen for new ideas, and has already a half belief in a future in which all things will be new.” With these ringing words of Matthew Arnold in our ears we face to-day one of the most insistent problems of the time—the reunion of the National Church with the orthodox non-episcopal churches of our land. Such a reunion would mark a long step taken towards the ultimate reunion of Christendom, and the realization of the Saviour’s prayer that all His people might be one. For such a consummation we need clarified vision, a heart of love, and withal the courage which refuses to accept an immediate gain at the sacrifice of essential principle.

English Churchmen have a great responsibility and opportunity in so stimulating an endeavour. The position of our Church, let us remind ourselves, is unique among the historic Churches of Christendom, a fact of which we have been growingly conscious since the days of Hooker. She alone has been able to combine loyalty to Holy Scripture with deference to the practice of the Early Church. A Bible-loving Church is of necessity a freedom-loving Church, while the historical instinct guards that liberty from degenerating into licence. If our reformed Church continues faithful to her historical position, she may yet reunite Christendom in one. That is a vision that lies in the still distant future, for there is no hope of reunion with Rome until the reunion of the rest of Christendom leaves her an outcast among the Churches, just as there is no hope for the moral regeneration of Germany until she realizes that