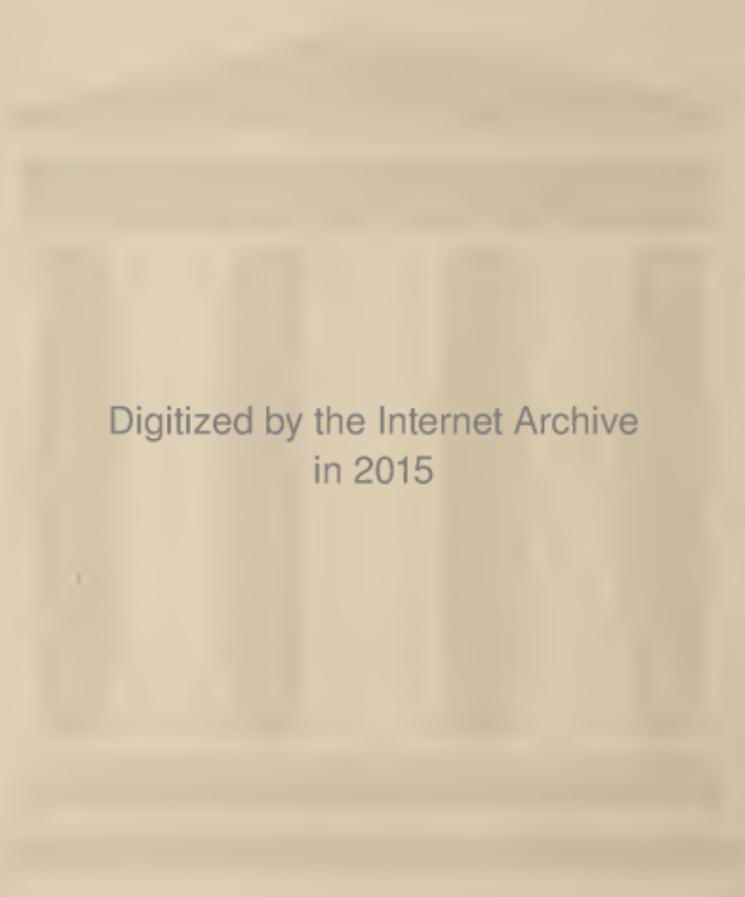


SOUND DOCTRINE

REV. DONALD FRASER, D.D.



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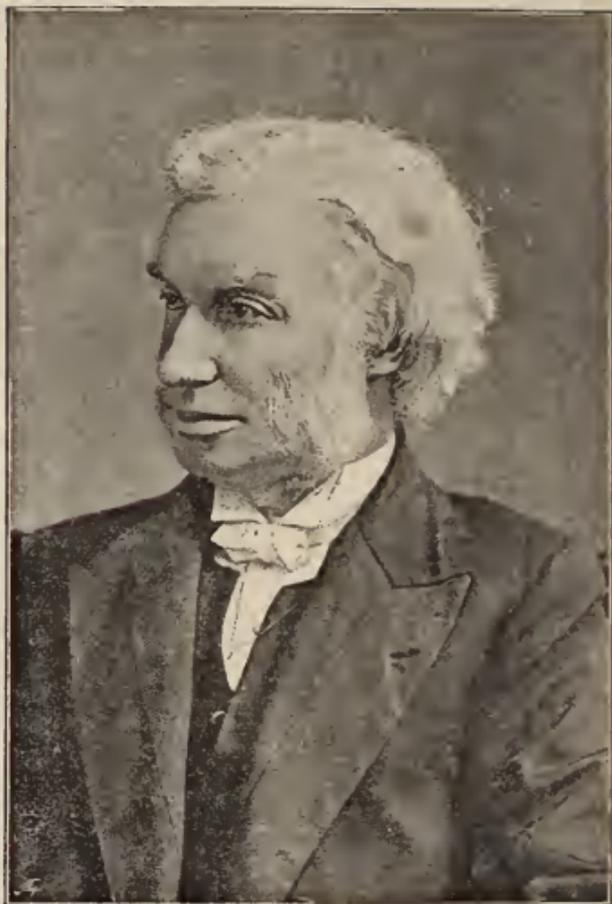
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THE REV. DONALD FRASER, D.D.

SOUND DOCTRINE

A COMMENTARY ON

THE ARTICLES OF THE FAITH

OF THE

Presbyterian Church of England

BY THE

REV. DONALD FRASER, D.D.

LONDON

PUBLICATION COMMITTEE

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF ENGLAND

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P R E F A C E.

THE "Articles of the Faith," on which a Commentary is here presented, were adopted with unanimity by the Synod of the Presbyterian Church of England on the first of May, 1890. They had not been hastily drawn up. The Committee of Synod which prepared them had been occupied upon this portion of its task since the year 1885. The draft of the Articles had been, during two successive years, subjected to a detailed examination by every Presbytery of the Church. No pains had been spared to render the document expressive of the living belief which obtains in this portion of Christ's Church on all doctrines of primary or fundamental consequence to the faith and experience of Christian men.

It is not pretended that these Articles embody any novel teaching on the great themes of Divine Revelation. They profess to be no more than a re-statement of truths long held by the group of Protestant Churches to which we belong. They are believed to be in substantial accord, both with the teaching of the Westminster Standards accepted in this Church, and with the general system of doctrine which finds more or less full expression in every

one of the long series of Reformed Confessions drawn up in the course of the sixteenth century. On some central doctrines, such as the Trinity and the Person of our Blessed Lord, they claim to be in harmony with the Œcumenical Councils of the ancient undivided Church in East and West. In their views of sin and grace they are frankly Augustinian. They are set forth, therefore, not because this Church had anything new to teach, but because it felt convinced that certain useful purposes would be served through the Divine Blessing by a fresh, clear, and popular presentation of its ancient faith, at least in essential points, in form and language adapted to present needs.

One of these purposes, contemplated from the first and specified in the instructions originally given by the Church to the Committee, was that of a "Summary of Doctrine to be used as a guide in the instruction of her people, especially of her younger members". It is in prosecution of this design that the present work has been prepared.

The Reformed or Calvinistic branch of the Church of Christ has always been honourably distinguished by the pains it has taken to indoctrinate its members in the contents of revelation. It has given much attention to the catechising of children; and at some periods of its history the use of Catechisms has not been confined by any means to persons of tender years. At the present day catechising

has gone a good deal out of fashion. In the case of young persons on the borders of adult age, it is hardly any longer practicable. But the want was never more evident than now of thorough and systematic grounding in the truths of God's Word. Loose and erroneous opinions on nearly every doctrine of religion are widely spread among all classes. A general haziness of belief, destitute of clear or fixed convictions, is apt to settle upon the mind, even of well-disposed young Christians, if they are left to pick up their ideas on such subjects at random amid the conflicting and often ill-considered utterances to be heard on every hand. Never was the guidance of some "form of sound words," based at every point on Divine Revelation, more called for, if the coming generation is not to drift into uncertainty or to fall into error, on the cardinal verities of Christianity. As one contribution at least towards such guidance the present Manual is issued under the sanction of the Synod's Committee on the Instruction of Youth. It is designed to serve at once as a guide to the private Christian in his study of truth, and also as a text-book for the conduct of ministers' classes, whether of catechumens or of young people in general.

From its severely condensed sentences and its somewhat minute sub-divisions, the reader will readily conclude that, with a view to its use as a text-book, a good deal is designedly left to the teacher. There is ample room both

for fuller exposition and for profitable enforcement of the truths taught. Nor are the biblical proofs, on which of course everything ought ultimately to rest, cited in the text with any attempt at completeness. Passages are often alluded to where no references are given. Still more frequently the Scripture evidence is suppressed. The judicious teacher will find much useful work for his pupils in verifying allusions and in tracing doctrine for themselves to its source in Holy Writ.

Although the present commentary is founded upon a document adopted by the Synod, and was prepared by its lamented Author at the request of a Committee of the Church, yet the helpful explanations which it contains cannot claim any official sanction in points of detail. They bear the stamp and are the independent utterance of their Author. At the same time, the late Dr. Fraser was exceptionally qualified for the task of exposition. Himself a careful and accurate divine, he had been from the first a member of the Committee which prepared the "Articles". Indeed, he had been one of the small Sub-Committee which in the first instance drafted the "Articles". Both in that preliminary work and in all the subsequent discussions to which, clause by clause, and word by word, every Article was subjected, he had borne a share second to none. The task, therefore, of expounding the document in its intended meaning was one for which hardly any other could be equally well equipped.

Alas, that the work should now carry with it such a pathetic and painful interest! It comes to us as his latest legacy to the Church which he loved and laboured for so well. Scarcely had the manuscript passed from his hand, before even its pages were in print, the pen had fallen for ever from his fingers, and the clear and busy brain was for ever still. The duty of revising the proof-sheets has consequently devolved upon others. But it has been performed with a pious and tender care. The Editors have been scrupulous to alter nothing which there is not reason to suppose the Author himself would have altered had he been spared to complete his labour of love: so that although the treatise must suffer disadvantage from not having received his own final touches, yet the Church may rest satisfied that it has here his handiwork in its integrity. By it, "he, being dead, yet speaketh".

In sending it forth, the Committee entreat the prayers of all who shall study these pages, that He Who is the Truth would pardon of His mercy whatever is amiss, and condescend to use what is His Own for the enlightenment and confirmation of His people in their most holy faith.

J. OSWALD DYKES,

*Joint-Convener of the Synod's Committee on
the Instruction of Youth.*

LIST OF CREEDS AND CONFESSIONS QUOTED OR
REFERRED TO.

	A. D.
Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed - - -	325 and 381
Apostles' Creed - - - - -	from 350
Creed of Council of Chalcedon - - - -	451
Augsburg Confession - - - - -	1530
First Helvetic do. - - - - -	1536
French do. - - - - -	1559
Scottish do. - - - - -	1560
Belgic do. - - - - -	1561
Thirty-nine Articles - - - - -	1563 and 1571
Canons of Council of Trent - - - - -	1563
Second (or Later) Helvetic Confession - - -	1566
Irish Articles of Religion - - - - -	1615
Canons of Synod of Dort - - - - -	1619
Orthodox Confession of the Eastern Church - -	1643
Westminster Confession and Catechisms - - -	1047



INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER,
ON SOUND DOCTRINE.

DOCTRINE means teaching. The Greek word which it represents appears in two forms in the New Testament: one of them denoting the matter of teaching, or the thing which is taught; the other the act of teaching. The former occurs in the pastoral epistles, where St. Paul commends "good doctrine" (1 Tim. iv. 6); "healthful doctrine" (2 Tim. iv. 3; Titus ii. 1). The latter is the term employed when St. Matthew describes the people as "astonished at the doctrine of Jesus" ["His teaching": R. V.] (St. Matt. vii. 28); and when the high priest said to the apostles: "Ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine" ["teaching": R. V.] (Acts v. 28). In the last instance, the second meaning blends itself with the first.

There is no question that Christian doctrine (the thing taught) existed at first in the form of uttered or written sayings of our Lord and His disciples. Whether it was a development or modification of truth previously delivered, or the disclosure of new conceptions to the human mind, it came in conversations, addresses, letters, and the like, not in formal propositions arranged in consecutive order. Yet, like all serious teaching on whatever subject, it must have

tended from the beginning to take shape and order on the lips of its teachers ; and must have already assumed some definite outline when the Apostle Paul required that men should teach in harmony therewith.

It was inevitable that the action of the human mind through many centuries should continue to give shape and colour to Christian doctrine ; and that controversy should mould and sharpen its terminology. We call this inevitable ; and yet we do not accept all the historical theology as either true or healthful. On the score of truth and soundness, the doctrine delivered to us must be tested by Holy Scripture.

What was the Reformation in the sixteenth century but a searching revision and correction of prevailing doctrine in the light of the Bible ? But the Reformed Churches never proposed to dispense with a definite theology. Before one another, and in face of the pope, the princes, and the people, they proclaimed and confessed their belief. And their confessions showed an impressive harmony.

In agreement with these, our ecclesiastical ancestors, we also refuse to hold our doctrine in vague suspense. It may well be that much is yet to be done in the elucidation of Scripture, and the adjustment of theological tenets ; but at all events some truths, and those of the first rank, are ascertained, and must be held as known. Further, these truths, if known, may be put into forms of words more or less precise. These, again, when set in order, make up a creed if the formula "I believe" or "We believe" be used. If they are set forth in impersonal propositions they constitute a confession of faith, or manifesto of Church doctrine.

Some such epitome of doctrine is indispensable to every collective Church that possesses any claim to historical continuity and consistency. At the same time, it is never

to be regarded as incapable of improvement, but is open to revision in the light of further knowledge or riper caution. Expressions may be amplified or curtailed; provisoes may be introduced or withdrawn; inferences may be added or struck out to the advantage of sound doctrine.

Most of the tirades which we hear against creeds and confessions are mere outcries against definiteness in theological convictions. The late George Eliot once described with keen pen that order of mind which "is fond of what may be called disembodied opinions that float in vapoury phrases". She ascribed this to "a bigotry against any clearly-defined opinions—a lack of coherent thought, a spongy texture of mind that gravitates strongly to nothing. The one thing it is staunch for is the utmost liberty of private haziness."

It may, however, be well to examine some of the objections which are urged against the use of creeds, or any insistence on a common doctrine in the Church.

(1) *That it is intellectually oppressive.*—It is alleged that dogma stifles thought, and that creeds are made of cast iron. It is a favourite device to harp on the word "dogma," which, though a very harmless term in itself—meaning a precise statement of ascertained truth, whether in philosophy or religion—yet has in the popular mind a suggestion of mental narrowness and obstinacy. The words, dogmatism, dogmatise, and dogmatical, all help to cast odium on dogma. The first step, therefore, is to raise a prejudice against Christian doctrine by calling it dogma, and implying that it cannot be assimilated, and ought not to be accepted by a self-respecting human mind.

The next step is to disparage the formulation of dogma in creeds, articles, and confessions of faith.

Some censure these as cumbrous and over-minute; and

with them we have no controversy. It is admitted that certain doctrinal symbols are open to this charge. The Athanasian Creed is too minute in its assertions on one great tenet of the Christian faith ; and most of the Reformed confessions, together with that of Westminster, are led into much detail, because they are manifestoes of orthodoxy on all controverted points, and are levelled against a host of errors. The effect of this has been to render most of those long creeds and confessions practically obsolete. But surely the proper remedy is not to abandon altogether the use of such documents, but to abridge and simplify them, correcting the over-minuteness and cumbrousness so much complained of. It is the more easy to do so, because the Reformed Churches, in committing themselves to a definite line of doctrine, have always drawn a distinction between truths primary and secondary, fundamental and non-fundamental, greater and less. Some points are more clearly revealed than others ; some are in themselves more weighty and momentous than others. The same emphasis is not laid on all the things affirmed ; and this gives some relief from the burden of detail.

But there are others who wish to get rid of creeds, root and branch. They allege that any document of the kind, however discreetly drawn up, is an incubus on the human understanding, and an impediment to freedom of inquiry. Thus we find a writer, recently deceased, denouncing the venerable creeds of Christendom as "the idols of unfledged intellects, but the stumbling-block or scorn of the penetrating and conscientious, barriers to the progress of truth, and usurpations on the prerogatives both of reason and of its Author".* This sort of thing has an imposing sound ; but it is mere rhetorical wind.

* *Sunshine and Shadows*, by W. B. Cilow, p. 115.

Is it to be gravely maintained that, in religion, nothing is ever to be discovered or known as certainly true, or that a thing so discovered and known may not be set down in words, lest it should forestall further and independent inquiry? If there be anything in theology at all, it is worthy of study; and in this, as in other branches of knowledge, students ought to help each other; but how can they do so if no amount of study may ever yield fruit capable of being shaped into a proposition or doctrine? Is there to be perpetual investigation, and no appreciable result? No other science, or department of thought, is treated in this fashion. When a fact in astronomy or a law in mechanics is affirmed, no one complains that freedom of inquiry is unfairly limited thereby. It is laid down that a law of gravitation pervades all nature, that it operates according to a certain rule, and with certain calculable effects. This is a dogma of science. It limits our freedom of opinion, inasmuch as it forbids us to think that there is no such law. But surely we should be no wiser for dropping the dogma. It is not the assertion of a fact in nature, but the fact itself which limits that absolute freedom of thought which is only a name for absolute ignorance. Why should one teacher, well versed in his subject, announce to us facts and laws of nature as ascertained and known, and another teacher, equally versed in his subject, be forbidden to inculcate such knowledge of God, of Christ, and of the way of the forgiveness of sins, as has been derived from the best sources? Granted that the doctrine may neither be conceived nor studied in a manner absolutely perfect. Human thought and language are inadequate to the great things of God. But let it be set forth in the best form to which the individual or the Church has attained. Inquiry or investigation is not thereby shorn of any

reasonable freedom. By all means let him to whom the doctrine is delivered study the question for himself, verifying that doctrine for his own satisfaction, or invalidating it if he is able so to do ; and let him be true to the honest conviction at which he arrives. But for any one to demand that there should be no recognised doctrine at all, that the knowledge acquired and expressed by the Church should be kept in vague solution, lest his inquiring mind should be biased, would be preposterous. And the same remark applies to a *catena* or systematic arrangement of Christian doctrines. As well might one complain of a map of the world, that it takes away the liberty of a traveller to find out all places for himself, to fix their bearings, and measure their distances, as allege against a system of doctrine, that it oppresses the human mind, and invades the freedom of thought.

(2) *That it is responsible for sectarian division.*—It is often said that bigots “fight for forms of faith,” and that insistence on mysterious dogma has embittered the history, and broken up the unity of the Church. Thus the question is put most plausibly : “What is the use of dwelling so much on religious conceptions and definitions on which no amount of argument can make men agree? And why spoil our tempers, and split Christian society asunder with strifes of words that have no end?”

Now it may be true that some divisions have been caused by an exaggerated strictness on points of doctrine, or on methods of conceiving and expressing them : but it is not the case that all the severe disputes have been on matters of faith. Those which have caused separation have quite as often had regard to the institutions and sacraments of the Church, the due succession and orders of her ministry, her modes of worship, and her government, including the

questions of papal and of royal supremacy. Moreover, it should be remembered that controversy, whether on these subjects or on doctrine properly so called, has been by no means a barren strife of words. Rendered necessary by the partial and conflicting perceptions of the same fact or truth by human minds, it has done good service in bringing out more complete and accurate statements of grand Christian verities than could otherwise have been reached. It should not be forgotten that the teaching of Christ and His apostles was educed and shaped by active controversy in their own time. It is nothing to be ashamed of that later controversies have been needed to assist and vindicate the just interpretation of their words.

As to the bitter and contentious temper which is imputed to some very orthodox champions in Church history, the fault has not been monopolised by the orthodox, but evenly distributed. There is, however, an obvious distinction between doctrines on their own merits and the spirit and method in which men defend and diffuse them. The former may be just and true, though the latter should be unfair and intemperate. Theology is one thing: the temper shown by theologians another thing. And doctrine is not open to reproach because partisans may have systematised it too rigidly, or urged their favourite *formule* in a severe or sectarian spirit.

(3) *That it is unfavourable to religious fervour and practice.*—There is a kind of pious protest against the inculcation of Christian doctrine. It comes from people who love to float on waves of feeling, and delight in *ahs!* and *ohs!* and other interjections, but shrink from *therefores*, and are afraid of arduous thinking. These are they who warn us against “dry doctrine” and “head knowledge”. But there is no necessity for keeping our doctrine very dry ;

and knowledge that does not enter our heads is not knowledge at all.

Others demand from the pulpit sound practical sermons without dogma. They do not understand that doctrine is the best friend of practice, but suppose them to be adversaries. Now there is no more frequent or more pernicious fallacy in religion than that of false antithesis. Because we distinguish doctrine from practice, careless or confused thinkers pit them against each other, and proceed to refuse the one, and applaud the other. But, in truth, these are intimately related together as foundation and superstructure, or as nourishing soil and mellow fruit. If Christian teachers were to cease from inculcating those doctrines which are just the ascertained truths of our religion, they would be committing the folly and crime of omitting the very basis on which Christian practice must rest, and from which it must derive continual support. Of non-Christian morals we do not speak: but surely it is beyond dispute that Christian conceptions of duty and rules of conduct must find themselves on definite thought and belief regarding God in Christ, *i.e.*, on theologic and Christologic doctrine?

It is idle to talk of dropping the creed and yet retaining the tone and sentiment of Christianity for practical ends. The tone left to itself would soon die out in a world like this. The sentiment would quickly exhale. Empty the vase of the rose leaves, and the perfume will linger a while, but it grows fainter and fainter, and at last there is none. So will the Christian sentiment disappear, if you throw the Christian doctrine away.

Thus we find no substance in the allegations which are advanced with a view to discredit a systematic teaching of the great Christian tenets; and we recognise it as the duty

of the Church to hold fast, and, through the lips of public teachers, to hold forth the sound or wholesome doctrine—no matter whether it be liked or disliked by “the spirit of the age”. There is no need to do this in a dry, contentious spirit, or in a narrow and pedantic fashion. Let it be done with charity toward those who think differently and with a reverence for the largeness of divine truth, which can never be all compressed within the limits of any dogmatic system. But done it should be in the best manner of which the Church is capable. Done it must be if the Church is to grow and prevail; for no Church that neglects doctrine has much life or vigour. Every one must see that the conquering, spreading, missionary Christianity, is that which possesses clear and full doctrinal convictions, and has the courage to proclaim and propagate them.

And why is it so? No one alleges that doctrine ever so clearly enunciated, and ever so correctly received by the understanding, saves the soul. Jesus Christ alone saves; and He saves those only who with the heart believe in Him. But to believe in Him implies the acceptance of certain truths, which are doctrines regarding Christ—as to Who He is, what is the constitution of His person, what was meant by His unique relation to God, what is the efficacy of His death, and what the import and power of His resurrection. By all means let the Church trust for her growth and triumph to the simplicity of the Gospel; but let her remember that the Gospel is no mere repetition of the formula: “Come to Jesus”. It includes and requires definite teaching or doctrine concerning Jesus and His power to save.

St. Paul foretold an evil time in which men will not endure sound doctrine, but heaping to themselves teachers and turning away from the truth, will delude their own

souls with "fables". Such is the *Nemesis* which awaits our anti-doctrinal Christians who inquire but never ascertain, who have many shifting views but no settled convictions. They lose their way altogether, and end their quest in a heap of fables. We see too much of this drift in the present generation;—the fickle mood of mind which gathers no wisdom and the curious vagaries of religious speculation and revivals of old heresies which gain a hearing and even attract disciples.

The twenty-four Articles, and our Commentary thereon, are intended to furnish an orderly statement of sound doctrine drawn from the Bible. It is a great task, not lightly undertaken. May the Spirit of the truth guide both the writer and his readers! "They also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding; and they that murmured shall learn doctrine."

THE
ARTICLES OF THE FAITH.

I. OF GOD.

We believe in, and adore, one living and true God, Who is spirit, personal, infinite, and eternal, present in every place, the almighty Author and sovereign Lord of all; most blessed, most holy, and most free; perfect in wisdom, justice, truth and love; to us most merciful and gracious: unto Whom only we must cleave, Whom only we must worship and obey. To Him be glory for ever. Amen.

II. OF THE TRINITY.

We acknowledge, with the ancient Church, the mystery of the Holy Trinity as revealed in Scripture, and believe that in the unity of the ever blessed Godhead there are three Persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, of one substance, equal in power and glory.

III. OF CREATION.

We believe that Almighty God, for His own holy and loving ends, was pleased in the beginning to create the heavens and the earth, by the Son, the Eternal Word; and, through progressive stages, to fashion and order this world, giving life to every creature; and to make man in His own image, that he might glorify and enjoy God, occupying and subduing the earth and having dominion over the creatures, to the praise of his Maker's name.

IV. OF PROVIDENCE.

We believe that God the Creator upholds all things by the word of His power, preserving and providing for all His creatures, according to the laws of their being; and that He, through the presence and energy of His Spirit in nature and history, disposes and governs all events for His own high design: yet is He not in any wise the author or approver of sin, neither are the freedom and responsibility of man taken away, nor have any bounds been set to the sovereign liberty of Him Who worketh when and where and how He pleaseth.

V. OF THE FALL.

We believe and confess that our first father, Adam, the representative head as well as common ancestor of mankind, transgressed the commandment of God through temptation of the devil, by which transgression he fell from his original state of innocence and communion with God; and so all mankind, being in him, have come under just condemnation, are subject to the penalty of death, and inherit a sinful nature, estranged from God, from which proceed all actual transgressions: and we acknowledge that out of this condition no man is able to deliver himself.

VI. OF SAVING GRACE.

We believe and proclaim that God, Who is rich in mercy as well as of perfect justice, was moved by His great love to man to hold forth from the first a promise of redemption, which from age to age He confirmed and unfolded, and that, in the fulness of the time, He accomplished His gracious purpose by sending His Son to be the Saviour of

the world : wherefore our salvation out of sin and misery is ever to be ascribed to free and sovereign grace.

VII. OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

We believe in and confess, with the ancient Church, the Lord Jesus Christ, Who, being the eternal Son of God, became man by taking to Himself a true body and soul, yet without sin, being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, and born of the Virgin Mary ; so that He is both God and Man, two whole perfect and distinct natures, the divine and the human, being inseparably joined together in one person, that He might be the Mediator between God and man, by Whom alone we must be saved.

VIII. OF THE WORK OF CHRIST.

We believe that the Mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ, being anointed with the Holy Spirit to proclaim and set up the Kingdom of God among men, did by His perfect life on earth, through words and deeds of grace, and by His death upon the cross, declare the Father, Whose image He is ; and did fully satisfy divine justice, and obtain for us forgiveness of sins, reconciliation to God, and the gift of eternal life, through His obedience on our behalf to the law and will of His Father, even unto death, wherein, bearing our sins, He offered Himself up a sacrifice without spot to God.

IX. OF THE EXALTATION OF CHRIST.

We believe that Jesus Christ, being for our offences crucified, dead, and buried, saw no corruption, but was raised again on the third day, in Whose risen life we live

anew, and have the pledge of a blessed resurrection; that in the same body in which He rose He ascended into heaven, where, as our High Priest, He maketh continual intercession for us; and that He sitteth at the right hand of God, Head of the Church, clothed with authority and power as Lord over all.

X. OF THE GOSPEL.

We hold fast and proclaim that God, Who willeth that all men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth, has, by His Son our Saviour, given commission to the Church to preach unto all nations the Gospel of His grace, wherein He freely offers to all men forgiveness and eternal life, calling on them to turn from sin, and to receive and rest by faith upon the Lord Jesus Christ.

XI. OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of life, Who worketh freely as He will, without Whose quickening grace there is no salvation, and Whom the Father never withholds from any who ask for Him; and we give thanks that He has in every age moved on the hearts of men; that He spake by the prophets; that through our exalted Saviour He was sent forth in power to convict the world of sin, to enlighten the minds of men in the knowledge of Christ, and to persuade and enable them to obey the call of the Gospel; and that He abides with the Church, dwelling in every believer as the Spirit of truth, of holiness, and of comfort.

XII. OF ELECTION AND REGENERATION.

We humbly own and believe that God the Father, before the foundation of the world, was pleased of His sovereign

grace to choose unto Himself in Christ a people, whom He gave to the Son, and to whom the Holy Spirit imparts spiritual life by a secret and wonderful operation of His power, using as His ordinary means, where years of understanding have been reached, the truths of His Word in ways agreeable to the nature of man ; so that, being born from above, they are the children of God, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.

XIII. OF JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH.

We believe that every one, who through the grace of the Holy Spirit repents and believes the Gospel, confessing and forsaking his sins, and humbly relying upon Christ alone for salvation, is freely pardoned and accepted as righteous in the sight of God, solely on the ground of Christ's perfect obedience and atoning sacrifice.

XIV. OF SONSHIP IN CHRIST.

We believe that those who receive Christ by faith are united to Him, so that they are partakers in His life, and receive of His fulness ; and that they are adopted into the family of God, are made heirs with Christ, and have His Spirit abiding in them, the witness to their sonship, and the earnest of their inheritance.

XV. OF THE LAW AND NEW OBEDIENCE.

We believe and acknowledge that the Lord Jesus Christ has laid His people by His grace under new obligation to keep the perfect Law of God, and has by precept and example enlarged our knowledge of that Law, and illustrated the spirit of filial love in which the divine will is to

be obeyed ; and we bless God that the obedience of Christians, though in this life always imperfect, yet being the fruit of their union to Christ, is accepted for His sake and well-pleasing to God.

XVI. OF SANCTIFICATION AND PÉR-SEVERANCE.

We believe that the Holy Spirit dwelling in all Christ's people purifies their hearts, enabling them to do freely and cheerfully that which the will of God requires, so that in measure as they surrender themselves to the Spirit of Christ, and follow the guidance of His Word, they receive strength for daily service, and grow in holiness after the image of their Lord ; or if, departing from God through unwatchfulness and neglect of prayer, any of them lapse into spiritual languor, or fall into grievous sins, yet by the mercy of God Who abideth faithful they are not cast off, but are chastened for their backsliding, and through repentance restored to His favour, so that they perish not.

XVII. OF THE CHURCH.

We acknowledge one holy catholic Church, the innumerable company of saints of every age and nation, who, being united by the Holy Spirit to Christ their Head, are one body in Him, and have communion with their Lord and with one another : further, we receive it as the will of Christ that His Church on earth should exist as a visible and sacred brotherhood, consisting of those who profess faith in Jesus Christ and obedience to Him, together with their children, and organized for the confession of His name, the public worship of God, the upbuilding of the saints, and the

proclamation of the Gospel ; and we acknowledge, as a part, more or less pure, of this universal brotherhood, every particular Church throughout the world which professes this faith in Jesus Christ and obedience to Him, as Divine Lord and Saviour.

XVIII. OF CHURCH ORDER AND FELLOWSHIP.

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ, the sole Head of His Church, has appointed its worship, teaching, discipline and government to be administered according to His will revealed in Holy Scripture, by officers chosen for their fitness, and duly set apart to their office ; and although the visible Church, even in its purest branch, may contain unworthy members, and is liable to err, yet believers ought not lightly to separate themselves from its communion, but are to live in fellowship with their brethren : which fellowship is to be extended, as God gives opportunity, to all who in every place call upon the name of the Lord Jesus.

XIX. OF HOLY SCRIPTURE.

We believe that God, Who manifests Himself in creation and providence, and especially in the spirit of man, has been pleased to reveal His mind and will for our salvation at successive periods and in various ways ; and that this Revelation has been, so far as needful, committed to writing by men inspired of the Holy Spirit, in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, which are therefore to be devoutly studied by all as God's written Word or message to mankind : and we reverently acknowledge the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scriptures to be the Supreme Judge in questions of faith and duty.

XX. OF THE SACRAMENTS.

We acknowledge Baptism and the Lord's Supper, the two Sacraments instituted by Christ, to be of perpetual obligation, as signs and seals of the new covenant, ratified in His precious blood; through the observance of which His Church is to confess her Lord and to be visibly distinguished from the rest of the world: Baptism with water into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost being the sacrament of admission into the visible Church, in which are set forth our union to Christ and regeneration by the Spirit, the remission of our sins, and our engagement to be the Lord's; and the Lord's Supper, the sacrament of communion with Christ and with His people, in which bread and wine are given and received in thankful remembrance of Him and of His sacrifice on the cross, and in which they who in faith receive the same do, after a spiritual manner, partake of the body and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, to their comfort, nourishment, and growth in grace.

XXI. OF THE SECOND ADVENT.

We assuredly believe that on a day known only to God, the Lord Jesus Christ will suddenly come again from heaven with power and great glory; and we look for this second appearing of our Saviour as the blessed hope of His Church, for which we ought always to wait in sober watchfulness and diligence, that we may be found ready at His coming.

XXII. OF THE RESURRECTION.

We believe that the souls of the righteous enter at death upon a state of rest and felicity at home with the Lord; that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the

just and of the unjust, through the power of the Son of God ; and that the bodies of all who are fallen asleep in Christ, as well as of the faithful who are alive at His coming, shall be fashioned anew and conformed to the body of His glory.

XXIII. OF THE LAST JUDGEMENT.

We believe that God will judge the world in righteousness by Jesus Christ, before Whom all men must appear, Who shall separate the righteous from the wicked, make manifest the secrets of the heart, and render to every man according to the deeds which he hath done in the body, whether good or evil, when the wicked shall go away into eternal punishment but the righteous into eternal life.

XXIV. OF THE LIFE EVERLASTING.

Finally, we believe in and desire the life everlasting in which the redeemed shall receive their inheritance of glory in the kingdom of their Father, and be made fully blessed in the presence and service of God, Whom they shall see and enjoy for ever and ever. Amen.



ARTICLE I.

OF GOD.

We believe in, and adore, one living and true God, Who is spirit, personal, infinite, and eternal, present in every place, the almighty Author and sovereign Lord of all ; most blessed, most holy, and most free ; perfect in wisdom, justice, truth and love ; to us most merciful and gracious ; unto Whom only we must cleave, Whom only we must worship and obey. To Him be glory for ever. Amen.

IN the short Saxon word *God*—a word of uncertain origin—we utter the greatest conception that has reached the human soul. It is that of a Being Who is the very Fountain of Life—the Absolute and All-Perfect One. Statements descriptive of Him, however choice and correct the language, must be inadequate to their sublime and really ineffable theme. Let us begin with this acknowledgment, and bow in adoration before Him Whom no eye of mortal sees, and no mind of mortal man can penetrate.

The Westminster Confession of Faith begins with a chapter on Holy Scripture. So did the Helvetic Confessions in

the sixteenth century, and for the obvious reason that those documents were manifestoes of doctrine designed to obviate mistake and defeat calumny. Therefore they put first the source from which their materials were derived, and the authority on which they rested; *viz.*, Holy Writ, and not the decrees of popes or the traditions of Christendom. But the ancient creeds and the majority of the Reformed Confessions * begin with a declaration of faith in God. Evidently this is the natural order. It would be a strange thing to say "I believe in the Book of God" before saying "I believe in God". Let us begin with the more fundamental proposition. We believe in a Supreme Intelligence, Supreme Affection, Supreme Justice, Supreme Will. At the apex of being, at the source of life and force, at the centre of universal order is God. Good has a Best, strength a Strongest, and righteousness One Who is inflexibly just. Without this faith the order of the world is a riddle, and the mystery of life a crushing burden to the mind. The supremacy of unthinking, unconscious force, the origination and regulation of the universe without any intelligent design, we can never accept. The thing is unthinkable. And we follow alike the best intuitions of the soul and the strongest presumption of our reason when we believe in God, and thirst for God.

"*We believe in, and adore, one living and true God.*"—The creed called "The Apostles'" has "I believe in God"; the Nicene Creed, "I believe in one God". Both the Thirty-nine Articles and the Westminster Confession have exactly the same statement, "There is but one living and true God". The phrase "living and true" is obviously directed against the gods of the heathen which had no breath of life in them, no genuine divinity. The expression is derived from the

* The Augsburg, the French, the Belgic, the Scottish, and the Thirty-nine Articles.

Bible. In the Psalms, the Prophets, and all parts of the New Testament we read of "the living God". Jeremiah also writes, "Jehovah is the true God". The two epithets are found together in 1 Thess. i. 9, when God is placed in contrast with "idols".

"*Who is spirit.*"—In opposition to those who deify objects in nature, or who embody their conceptions of gods in carved or graven images, we affirm in the words of our Saviour that God is spirit; not a Spirit, but spirit, essential, fontal, original and originating, and not flesh, not limited by material conditions or by bodily parts and organs. It is true that in many parts of the Bible the organs and feelings of a man are attributed to the Deity. This however is by a figure of speech adapted to the conditions of human thought when applied to the Supreme. It is beyond our capacity to apprehend, and still more so to express, the mode of existence proper to a Being Who is pure and infinite spirit; and therefore we have to speak in a figure of "the face of God," "eye of God," "hand of God," "seat of the Most High". But the language is not to be taken prosaically. God is spirit, and therefore not to be conceived of as in a bodily shape, nor represented by any pictured or sculptured form.

"*Personal.*"—We are apt to associate spirit with the indefinite. What is without shape or limit seems quite vague and indeterminate. Therefore is the adjective "personal" inserted immediately after spirit. Our theism is not satisfied with the acknowledgment of a power, or force, or energy, or all-pervading order. There is a Being Who wields the power and Who has instituted and maintained the order of the world. So we affirm that the great Spirit is personal, meaning not at all to imply that we can explain His existence, but that He may use the pronouns I, Mine, Me, that

when we invoke Him we may say Thou, Thine and Thee, and, when we refer to the existence of God, must say He, His and Him. It is also implied that the Spirit in Whom we believe and Whom we adore has personal consciousness, perception, disposition, purpose and will. Therefore there may be fellowship and even friendship between such a God and such beings as ourselves; with a non-personal God we can have no relations whatever.

That we believe in God excludes Atheism.

That we believe in one living and true God excludes Polytheism.

That we believe in God Who is Spirit excludes the use of Images.

That we believe in God Who is personal excludes Pantheism.

“*The almighty Author and sovereign Lord of all.*”—On these titles we do not expatiate here; because the first of them must recur when we reach the third Article on Creation, and the second under the fourth Article on Providence.

Then the chief attributes of God are named. In treating of them, we shall find some help in the distinction drawn by divines of other days between natural and moral attributes. Not that they are separate or separable in the Deity, but that the distinction helps the mind and memory of man.

(1) *The Natural Attributes* are those which bear on the greatness of God, not on His goodness or moral perfection. Thus we affirm that He is infinite, eternal, present in every place, and in His will and creation “most free”.

Infinitude with omnipresence: these baffle human conception. But without question they are in sacred Scripture ascribed to God Who has no limit set to His all-pervasive presence and all-controlling power.

On hearing this, some may cry out that on this theory God

is all, and "the all" is God, for the Infinite and Omnipresent leaves no room unoccupied for any other being or any other thing. He fills earth and heaven. But in that very phrase is it not assumed that there is an earth and a heaven which are not God, but only His habitation? Then, on the earth which we survey, is it not plain that the existence of ever so many finite human spirits—many of them very wide-stretching in action and influence—in no wise invades the personality of each, far less interferes with the space and scope required by material objects? And why may not the Supreme Spirit pervade the universe without crowding out all but Himself, or without absorbing into Himself all other spirits and even all substances? We acknowledge our inability to show and explain all that the infinitude of God implies, but we can at all events show that it does not involve absurdities.

Eternity is the divine infinitude as related to duration: and it is often ascribed to God in Holy Writ. "The eternal God is thy refuge." "The Holy One inhabiteth eternity." This also is a conception too high for us. We cannot say how it is, but we learn from the Bible that so it is. God is from everlasting to everlasting calmly consistent with Himself, yet there is no stagnation in His being, thought has its movement and succession in His mind, and purposes march to their fulfilment. His eternity means not a stony immobility, but a sublime unhasting steadfastness.

The expression "*most holy and most free*" is taken from the Westminster Confession. It is the second of these epithets that falls among the natural attributes, and it is meant to shut out from our conception of God the ideas of fate or blind necessity. He has the prerogative of self-determination, and speaks or is silent, acts or refrains from acting, according to His good pleasure, or the counsel of His will.

These natural attributes of God fill the mind with adoring wonder. Those which we are now to consider ought to call forth our confidence and love.

(2) *The Moral Attributes.*—God is “*most blessed*” in the integrity and harmony of His being, and, therefore, the source of blessing to us, and to all His creatures. The world is full of frets and storms ; but above them all there reigns a glorious and benignant calm.

God tastes an infinite joy
In infinite ways—one everlasting bliss.*

“*Most holy,*” *i.e.*, utterly separate and removed from all that is base and evil, “glorious in holiness”. The gods of ancient nations were associated with practices most wicked and impure ; but Jehovah the God of Israel and our God was and is holy. It is this which the Seraphim celebrated in the vision of Isaiah, and the Cherubim in the vision of St. John. It is at the remembrance of this that all the saints give thanks. God is holy, and no evil may stand in His sight. He is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.

“*Perfect in wisdom, justice, truth, and love.*”—*Wisdom* must be taken in this place to include knowledge. From the divine cognisance nothing is hid. And then this all-embracing, all-penetrating knowledge is turned to highest use by His perfect wisdom. The Bible speaks of this as manifested in Creation, in Providence, and in the Church.

In Creation : “O Lord ! how manifold are Thy works ;
in wisdom hast Thou made them all”.

In Providence and History : “O the depth of the
riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God !
How unsearchable are His judgments, and His
ways past finding out.”

* Browning's *Paracelsus*.

In the Church: "To principalities and powers in the heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God".

Justice is no blind goddess, but an attribute of the living God, displayed in all His dealings with His rational and accountable creatures. No doubt a partial or superficial view of events may suggest that "the ways of the Lord are not equal"; but they that know Him are satisfied that there is no unrighteousness in Him. It is a conviction fundamental to all piety that the Judge of all the earth does right. His unbending justice satisfies the moral sense, and is felt in all consciences to be worthy of God.

Truth is a word which suggests that God will not fail or disappoint those who trust His word, and rest on His promises. All is real, not illusion. God verily is what He declares Himself to be; and He does not change His purpose or shift His ground. Perfect in truth, He "cannot lie".

Love.—The Westminster Confession describes God as "most loving". The Shorter Catechism is content with the word "goodness," following the Old Testament—"Abundant in goodness". "O give thanks to God, for He is good." But it has often been pointed out as a defect in the Catechism, that it answers the question, What is God? without even an allusion to the great New Testament saying, that "God is love". This is the very crown of His perfection, even as in man "love is the bond of perfectness". And this is the comfort of faith, that all the divine decrees, decisions, and dealings with men, while guided by wisdom, ordered in righteousness, and regulated in truth, issue from and are suffused with a transcendent love.

At this point, our Article passes from description to a personal avowal of what God is to us.

“*To us most merciful and gracious.*”—Who that has any knowledge and experience of God can withhold this tribute? We desire to call on all the believers in all lands and of all generations to join in this—the old and the young together, the learned and the unlearned. And not the least hearty response will come from those who have suffered and sorrowed. They will say: “Truly God has been good. ‘To us most merciful and gracious’—making rough places plain, and crooked things straight before us.”

Then, in the warmth of feeling which the thought of divine mercy and grace stirs in our hearts, we conclude this Article in words which are taken almost without change from the Scottish Confession of 1560.

“*Unto Whom only we must cleave, Whom only we must worship and obey. To Him be glory for ever. Amen.*”—So we declare that God is indispensable to us, and possesses by reason of what He is in Himself, and is to us, an overwhelming claim on our devotion and service.

Let us recur for a moment to the distinction between a creed and a didactic statement of doctrine. It is specially important under this first Article. We do not say “there is,” or even “we believe that there is one living and true God, and that He is spirit,” etc.: but “we believe in one living and true God Who is spirit,” etc. We do more than affirm the fact of His existence; we confide in Him for life and peace, and we testify to what we have found Him to be.

A subsequent Article will show how God is revealed to us and accessible to us in Christ. The first has enough to do in delineating the divine perfection as known to believing man. On this faith in God the whole caste of our religion must depend, and our entire conception of what man ought to be as restored to the moral image of God. In corrupt religions, men make gods in their own image: in the true,

God makes or re-makes men in His image. So the Article is no mere dry proposition : but the expression of a belief which ought to carry with it intense desire, profound submission, and ardent endeavours after God-likeness in goodness and holiness and truth.

O God, Thou art my God ; early will I seek Thee,
My soul thirsteth for Thee.
So will I bless Thee while I live,
I will lift up my hands in Thy name.



ARTICLE II.
OF THE TRINITY.

We acknowledge, with the ancient Church, the mystery of the Holy Trinity as revealed in Scripture, and believe that in the unity of the ever-blessed Godhead there are three Persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, of one substance, equal in power and glory.

“The mystery.”—The existence of the one true God in or as a *Holy Trinity* is a mystery in every sense of the word. It is such in the popular import of the term, as transcending our powers of thought; and it is such in the sense which mystery has in the New Testament, as a religious truth of the first order, which was hidden from former generations, but is now divinely disclosed.

“We acknowledge the mystery.”—We feel this to be the proper attitude of mind toward this truth. We do not analyse or dissect it with the instruments of logic; nor do we map it round with our poor words in explanation or defence. In reverence we bow and acknowledge the mystery. Yet not without adequate authority.

“As revealed in Scripture.”—It was not revealed under

the Old Testament, though there are suggestions of it in the Hebrew Scriptures which may be recognised by Christian readers.

In the writings of the Old Testament, the emphatic witness was borne to the Unity of God, in opposition to the multiplicity of gods in the heathen world. The New Testament holds the same witness to the Unity, but adds the disclosure of a Threeness in that Unity. The term Trinity does not occur in the Bible, but is an ancient theological term, framed to embody the teaching of Holy Writ. This teaching we find to be that the Father is God, that the Son is God, and that the Holy Ghost is God : and yet there is but one God. At the beginning, Christians were able to receive and spread this teaching without speaking in Greek of a Triad, or in Latin of a Trinity. But the progress of discussion and controversy on this as on other doctrines compelled the invention and use of a technical term or title.

It is not our purpose to cite the passages from the New Testament which convey the teaching above mentioned. Let our readers search out for themselves the places in which the Father is called God, the Son called God, and the Holy Spirit called God ; also those places in which divine powers and prerogatives, *e.g.*, that of searching and knowing the human heart, and that of presence in many localities at the same time, are ascribed now to the Father, now to the Son, and now to the Spirit. So these Three are divine ; and yet there is only one Deity. Then add to these the following passages wherein the Three are grouped together in a manner in which no creature, however excellent, could be conjoined with the Supreme : St. Matt. xxviii. 19. St. John xiv. 26 ; xv. 26. Ephes. ii. 18. 2 Cor. xiii. 14. 1 Cor. xii. 4-6. Jude 20, 21. Rev. i. 4.

“With the ancient Church.”—We believe on the authority of Scripture; but rejoice to know and say that in acknowledging this mystery, we are at one with the Church of the early centuries. It is only here, and in Article VII. on the Person of Christ, that we make the historical reference; and we do it for a reason which will at once suggest itself to educated men. All questions concerning the Holy Trinity and the divine-human Person of our Lord were keenly sifted and resolutely determined and settled by Greek theologians and General Councils, in the earlier centuries of our era. We do not receive their deliverances and definitions as infallible, but we are satisfied that they truly set forth the teaching of Holy Scripture. We do not repeat the creed which has been erroneously ascribed to St. Athanasius; but the doctrine which Athanasius vindicated against Arius, and which the Church has never departed from either in the East or in the West, is that which we acknowledge and maintain.

What we have found on this arduous theme in the Bible, and now utter as our faith in unison with the ancient Church, is next put shortly and succinctly as follows:—

“We believe that in the unity of the ever-blessed Godhead there are three Persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.”—Those who call themselves Unitarians seem to claim that they only in Christendom affirm the unity of God; but the simple fact is that all Christians without exception believe in and confess “the Unity”. The real question is not as to the fact of the Unity, but as to what the Unity may comprehend and enclose. A Unitarian will probably say that we do by the doctrine of a Threeness destroy that of the Oneness, whether we mean to do so or not. We shall examine this allegation a little further on. Meanwhile let us at all events have credit for sincerity in maintaining

the Divine Unity. And let this important fact be noticed, that Trinitarians never address God in the plural in their devotions. They sing and pray to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit; but they never say "Ye," always "Thou"; never "They," always "He". This is because the belief in the Trinity does not in their minds destroy or even disturb the belief in the Unity. Neither in thought nor in language may God be pluralised.

Confessedly the term "*Persons*" in the Godhead is open to objection. Taken from the Latin, it has long been in use for want of a better word, but is apt to suggest to the English mind more distinction and separation than is intended. Let us try to state what it is that we wish to say of the Three in One. On the one hand, we do not mean that there are three separate beings as we call three men three persons. On the other hand, we do not mean that the one living and true God has three modes of self-manifestation. But this we mean, that in the unsearchable and ineffable existence of God there is a certain eternal and necessary distinction of Three without multiplying or dividing the One, and to this effect: that the Father loves the Son, sends the Son, and speaks to the Son; and the Son sends the Holy Spirit, and speaks of the Holy Spirit as "He" or "Him". The Son is only-begotten of the Father; the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son.

"*Of one substance.*"—This clause is inserted to emphasise the real Unity which underlies and encloses Trinity. It is taken *verbatim* from the Westminster Confession and the Thirty-nine Articles. In the Scottish Confession we read: "One in substance"; in the two Westminster Catechisms: "The same in substance"; in the Belgic Confession: "One single essence". The Athanasian Creed has: "Neither confounding the Persons, nor dividing the substance"; a

valuable form of words. In all these symbols, and in our article, the term "substance" is used to express not a physical or material basis for the divine existence, but that in God which underlies all modes and manifestations, to which attributes belong, in which qualities inhere.

This was the great contention of Athanasius and of those who with and after him maintained the *homoousion* against the *homoiousion*. The controversy has been much derided as "vain jangling" on the ground that there is literally only an iota of difference between the words. But a very small difference in form may cover a great distance in meaning. In this case it is the distinction between being of a like substance and being of the same substance. It was no vain jangling to affirm that the Son is of one and the same substance with the Father, as against the proposition that the Son is of an essence or substance resembling that of the Father. In fact, this affirmation is indispensable to the faith of the Trinity, and indeed to that of the Unity also.

"*Equal in power and glory.*"—These words are taken from the Westminster Catechisms. The Athanasian Creed says: "The divinity of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost is one, the glory equal, and the majesty equal". The Catechism of the Eastern Church has the expression: "Absolutely equal divine majesty". And this has found voice in the devotion of the universal Church from the second century downwards in the ascription of "glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost".

Such equality is obviously implied in the proposition that each of "the Persons in the Godhead" is truly and properly God. But this must not be taken to hinder or contradict the subordination of the Second to the First, or of the Third

to the First and Second in the execution of divine purposes and dispensation of divine mercy. In this last sense there is a voluntary inequality of order within the essential equality. The Father is greater than the Son, having sent Him into the world and given Him commandment. The Son is greater than the Spirit, for He shed forth the Spirit on the Church, that the Son might be glorified, and the Father glorified in Him. It is from not grasping this distinction between the inherent dignity, which is equal, and the dispensational arrangements, which introduce apparent or real inequalities for a time and a purpose, that many persons have seen contradictions in the New Testament, where there are none.

But something more must be said on the charge of contradiction. It is stoutly alleged that, no matter how particular texts may be explained, the doctrine of the Holy Trinity involves self-contradiction. "Three cannot be one : one cannot be three." Indeed! We should have thought it plain to every mind that what is one in one respect may be three or threefold in another respect. One man is spirit, soul and body—these three. The sheet we have written on is paper, ink and thought—these three. To constitute a contradiction, you must have an affirmation and a negation concerning the same subject *in the same respect*. If you say that a specified object is one foot in height, and at the same time that it is three feet in height, you contradict yourself. So also if we say that there is only one God, and at the same time that there are three Gods, we contradict ourselves. Or, if we say that God is one Person, but also that He is three Persons, we contradict ourselves. But no one says so. What is maintained is something quite different, *viz.*, that God is One in one respect, and Three in another respect. He is One in respect of the Eternal and Indivisible Essence; Three in respect of the triune distinction in the

Godhead, of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. This may be inscrutable ; but it is not contradictory nor irrational.

The Trinity is inscrutable : but so indeed is the Divine Unity also. It is easy to understand the unity of God as opposed to a plurality of gods. Monotheism, if true, makes polytheism untrue. But no one knows what the unity of such an existence may or may not comprise ; no one can be sure that there is not a number of perfections necessary to the fulness of the Infinite One. In the last vision of Dante occur some noble lines which show how a great imagination endeavoured to body forth this truth, and staggered :—

In that abyss
Of radiance, clear and lofty, seem'd methought
Three orbs of triple hue, clip't in one bound,
And, from another, one reflected seem'd
As rainbow is from rainbow ; and the third
Seem'd fire, breathed equally from both. Oh, speech,
How feeble and how faint art thou to give
Conception birth !

Be it frankly said, that this doctrine is not given to the philosophers for analysis, or to the poets for decorative description. It is addressed to spiritual apprehensions, and these are not perplexed by it. During all the Christian centuries it has been received by devout souls without protest or demur. Nay, it has been held very precious. It has relieved the mind from the chilling effect of a bare monotheistic conception and has shown how God comes into manifestation, and into contact with His creatures, and how they may approach and commune with Him. It is found that the truth of the Trinity connects with all the doctrines of grace, and helps us to understand them. The covenant of our peace, the comfort of hope, the blessings of

justification, adoption, and sanctification all become intelligible only under the light of this Article of the Faith; for it will be found that none of what are called the doctrines of grace are firmly held by such as deny or disown the Holy Trinity. They never stop short at that denial, but abandon atonement, redemption, and regeneration also. Every Pelagian is not a Socinian, but every Socinian is a Pelagian, and virtually gives up the Gospel of our salvation.

It is a grievous mistake to suppose that this doctrine is an obscure or dizzy speculation, without practical value or usefulness. On the contrary, it is fundamental to theology, and to practical piety also. As men hold it fast and lovingly, they see further into all other revealed truths, and they grow in reverence and all the sacred affections. On the other hand, when men who learned it in their youth abandon the truth, or hold it vaguely and loosely, they become unsound on ever so many other points, and, as to personal religion, often become lukewarm and self-righteous.

The Jew, the Gentile Deist, and the Moslem, all say: "God is one, and there is no other but He". So say we too. But, as Christians, we are taken nearer to the divine secret, and obtain further discoveries of divine wisdom and goodness, and drink of deep wells of salvation, in that we are taught to recognise in the one God not a mere unicity, but the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit:—the Father Who has loved us, the Son Who has redeemed us, and the Holy Spirit Who regenerates and comforts us. To Whom be glory everlasting!



ARTICLE III.
OF CREATION.

We believe that Almighty God, for His own holy and loving ends, was pleased in the beginning to create the heavens and the earth, by the Son, the Eternal Word; and, through progressive stages, to fashion and order this world, giving life to every creature; and to make man in His own image, that he might glorify and enjoy God, occupying and subduing the earth and having dominion over the creatures, to the praise of his Maker's name.

THE belief affirmed in this Article regards God as "Almighty". No being less than omnipotent could ever have done the work which is described, framing the worlds and calling the universe into existence. The more we know of that universe the more our wonder grows. The more we ascertain of this planet on which we dwell and of the unnumbered suns and planets that move through space, with prodigious velocity through prodigious orbits, yet with mathematical precision, the more emphasis we must lay on the belief that He Who made and marshalled all these is Almighty.

“*For His own holy and loving ends.*”—The thought of divine power is not the only one which a survey of creation suggests. In wisdom has God made all things. And for other objects than a mere display of might—for objects worthy of the Divine Creator, holy and loving ends. What these ends are we may but very imperfectly discern with our present measure of light, but that they are good, and only good—such is our faith. To think otherwise would be to dishonour the great Creator.

This Article contains three affirmations :—

I. “*That Almighty God was pleased in the beginning to create the heavens and the earth, by the Son, the Eternal Word.*”—To the words “Maker of heaven and earth” the Nicene Creed adds, “and of all things visible and invisible”. From that source the same form of words passed into the Scottish Confession, the Thirty-nine Articles, and the Westminster Confession. The (so-called) Apostles’ Creed had not even the words “Maker of heaven and earth” till they were introduced from Eastern sources in the seventh century. The question of the origin of the world did not interest the West so much as the East, where the Biblical doctrine of creation came into conflict alike with the philosophical tenet of the eternity of matter, and with the gnostic view that the Maker of the world, or Demiurge, is a being quite distinct from the Supreme God.

The attitude of strict Science toward the problem of creation is that of Nescience. It cannot tell whether the universe ever had a beginning or no; or, if it had, when and how. The order of the world certainly suggests an ordering intelligence capable of carrying out designs most minute and most comprehensive; but the origin of the matter and space, which form the universe, lies beyond mental ken and scientific scrutiny. And we say this in no

taunting spirit. It is no discredit to science that some matters are beyond its province, and beyond its unaided reach. The doctrine of creation, as we avow it, comes from revelation, not from discovery. "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear."

The phrase "*in the beginning*" is taken from the first verse of Genesis. It negatives at once the notion that the worlds have been from eternity just as we see them now; and the denial is corroborated by scientific observations and explorations in modern times. Yet the words in Genesis are not intended to fix a date for the origin of things. They merely express antiquity and anteriority—how remote no one can tell. Enough to know that, "of old, God created the heavens and the earth".

The term "*created*" ought also to be well scrutinised. We find four Hebrew words employed to express the act of making. Of these three are used in the Old Testament to denote the productive acts both of God and of men; but the fourth, which occurs in Gen. i. 1, and more than forty times thereafter, belongs to God only, and is never ascribed to men.* So, when we read that God created, we understand that He did something beyond all human power—called what did not exist into existence.

Three times in the first chapter of Genesis Elohim is said to have created: (1) At the production of the heaven and earth, v. 1; (2) At the introduction of animal life on land and water, v. 21; (3) At the formation of man, v. 27. It is worthy of notice that at two of these points modern teachers of continuous evolution confess that they cannot "make their connections". They cannot tell how matter

* See Young's *Analytical Concordance*.

originated, or how man first came to be. At these points the Bible says: "Elohim created".

This sublime affirmation marks with a firm hand the absolute distinction between God and what is called Nature. Ancient nations were prone to confound these together, and fell to worshipping objects and powers of nature, first as manifestations of God, and then as gods.

So the Persian
With myrtle-wreathed tiara on his brow
Presented sacrifice to moon and stars,
And to the winds and mother elements,
And the whole circle of the heavens, for him
A sensitive existence, and a god.*

At one stroke the Bible condemned all worship of nature by showing that its orbs, however grand, and its form, however mighty, are only products of the creative wisdom and energy of God.

Another clause is added in our Article to set forth a truth of New Testament revelation—*viz.*, that in creation God acted through or by the Son of God, the Eternal Word. The passages of the New Testament which so teach are St. John i. 3; Col. i. 16; Heb. i. 2. The Nicene Creed says of the Son: "By Whom all things were made". And similar statements occur in the writings of old Church Fathers, as Irenæus. This point of doctrine was somehow omitted from most of the Reformed Confessions; but it has place in the Belgic, and the two Helvetic.

So the Holy Trinity appears in the work of creation: (1) The Father Almighty, the Fountain of divine purpose; (2) The Son, as Divine Executive; (3) The Holy Spirit, brooding and begetting. Thus far of the creation of "heaven and earth," or the visible universe.

* Wordsworth's *Excursion*, bk. iv.

II. *That Almighty God through progressive stages fashioned and ordered this world for its inhabitants.*—This is a distinct statement; and it is a great point gained to have this put separately from the origination of heaven and earth, instead of being confounded with it, as in former confessions and catechisms. Men have felt much difficulty in reconciling the narrative of a preparation of the world in six days for its inhabitants, with the evidences of its own formation which the earth has disclosed to the geologists; and straightway have rejected the doctrine of divine creation altogether. But this is most unreasonable. The origin of the universe is one thing; the fitting up of this world for inhabitation is another thing; and the former is in no way or measure discredited by difficulties which apply only to the latter.

Through the study of palæontology and geology, competent men are endeavouring to trace the long periods, and to mark the transitions, slow or sudden, through which our earth has arrived at its present form and condition. We follow them with much interest and entire good-will. It is evident that they are still some way from definite conclusions. Many conclusions recently widely accepted have been modified or even discarded as the result of accessions to knowledge. Nothing that can be discovered can ever affect the ulterior truth of divine creation; because these sciences bear only on the fashioning and ordering of the world, and not at all on its origin or initiation.

As to the “fashioning and ordering” work, described in Genesis as accomplished in six successive days, three things are obvious to the attentive reader.

(1) The story is told *optically*, as though all passed before the eye of the narrator in a panorama.

(2) The story is told *mnemonically*, so arranged as to

hold the memory. And, no doubt, this "wondrous tale" was told by one of the ancients to another, and carried on from one generation to another by memory, until it was written down, and so preserved.

(3) From the nature of the story, and the general usage of Scripture, it is reasonable to suppose, that the days in Genesis i. are not short periods of twenty-four hours, but long periods or ages. The operations described are those of God, and not of man, and the days in which they were "finished" were surely on God's scale, and not on ours.

What is of highest interest and importance in Genesis i. is that the Scripture reveals, and has all along revealed, a great truth which science has very slowly found out, that this world has been fashioned and ordered through progressive stages. There has been a gradual development; and yet this has not been continuous, or without drawbacks and pauses, for there have been evenings and mornings. It has also been revealed that among living forms the progress has been from lower to higher: vegetation before animal life; birds and fishes before mammals; and all the lower animals before man. In its scope, and even in its details, the first chapter of Genesis is scientifically accurate.

It follows from what has been affirmed of God, that it is He Who gave "*life to every creature*". The Bible says so; and no other rational account has ever been given of the origin of life.

III. *That God was pleased "to make man in His own image"*.—Here also we rest on Genesis i., which tells how man is related on the one hand to other living creatures; and on the other hand to the Divine Creator. He has not been developed or evolved from those apes and chimpanzees which hold themselves erect, yet is he not altogether different from other terrestrial mammals. He came into

being in the same day, or division of time, with them, and has his points of resemblance to them, though with evident marks of superiority. The other side of the truth is that man is related to the Divine Maker in a way which other living creatures do not share; for "Elohim said: Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness".

Wherein this image or likeness consists is a question which has been much canvassed, and variously answered. It is not the occupation of the earth, or the dominion over the creatures thereon; for these things were given to man by divine grant, not involved in the possession of a divine likeness. We therefore state those prerogatives in separate clauses: "*Occupying and subduing the earth, and having dominion over the creatures, to the praise of his Maker's name*". Neither can we find the divine image in the human form and lineaments; for God is spirit. The image or likeness must be in the mental and moral constitution of man, which bore and still, in a measure, bears a reflection of God.

It is laid down in the Shorter Catechism of Westminster that the image of God, after which man was made, consisted in "knowledge, righteousness, and holiness". (Knowledge is in the mind, righteousness in the will, and holiness in the affections and motives of life.) This is inferred from the statements of St. Paul regarding restored and renewed man. (See Col. iii. 10; Eph. iv. 24.) We have, however, refrained from affirming so much in our new Article, because the authority claimed is only indirect and inferential, and because we cannot argue back from the new man under grace to the original man as first made. The "new creation" does more than regain the first state of man as a creature of God. It heightens and betters that state. Even if it were a mere recurrence to the primitive condition, no one can tell how much or how little the first man

knew, or how far his moral being, untried and undisciplined, was entitled to be called not merely innocent, but righteous and holy. Therefore we avoid uncertain definitions, and are content with the words of the Bible—"in His own image"—for these words sufficiently indicate all we can be sure of, *viz.*, that man was endowed with a mental and moral nature capable of understanding the thoughts and words of God, and of holding communion with Him.

Then we express the chief end of man as thus called into existence and highly endowed, in the formula which the Shorter Catechism has made famous—"that he might glorify and enjoy God". Such an aim in life can be sustained by no creature that has not something of the image and likeness of God ; or, to use New Testament language, some conformity to Christ, Who is "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His person".

The belief that man was made in the divine image, and for the high end now declared, is indispensable to our religion. It is this which makes any real revelation of God to us possible. If ours were not a moral nature formed after His, we could not recognise His moral perfections. The very words which express these would have no meaning for us. We could not esteem the divine justice or truth, unless we had conscience, and knew the obligation of veracity. We could have no conception of what is meant by the adage,—“God is love,” unless we had in ourselves the capacity of love. The inferior moral being may enter into sympathetic relation with the Supreme Being. Creatures without such a moral constitution cannot.

Another point must be noted. The making of man in God's image prepared the way for the manifestation of God in man's image—the incarnation of the Son of God. It was possible for the divine nature to join itself to human nature

in the person of Jesus Christ, because humanity was originally made after the divine likeness. When sin was altogether absent, as in the case of our Saviour, there was no jar or discord between the affections and will of the Son of God and the faculties and activities of the Son of Man.

The whole theme of creation ought to kindle devout feeling. The Lord rejoices in His works, and we, too, should rejoice in them, and speak of the glorious honour of His majesty. The apostles write of Him as the "Merciful Creator," the "Faithful Creator". "O come! let us worship, and bow down. Let us kneel before the Lord our Maker!"



ARTICLE IV.
OF PROVIDENCE.

We believe that God the Creator upholds all things by the word of His power, preserving and providing for all His creatures, according to the laws of their being ; and that He, through the presence and energy of His Spirit in nature and history, disposes and governs all events for His own high design : yet is He not in any wise the author or approver of sin, neither are the freedom and responsibility of man taken away, nor have any bounds been set to the sovereign liberty of Him Who worketh when and where and how He pleaseth.

THE word Providence, in relation to God, does not occur in Holy Writ, but the conception which it is meant to express runs through all parts of the Bible, and has been assumed as true in all the prayers and all the patience of the people of God. The Greek equivalent—*pronoia*—is found in the Apocryphal Book of Wisdom. The 17th chapter of that book has the phrase “eternal Providence” (v. 2), which Milton uses with such dignity in the outset of his epic poem :—

That to the height of this great argument
I may assert eternal Providence,
And justify the ways of God to man.

We also recall his lines on the expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise :—

The world was all before them where to choose
Their place of rest, and Providence their guide.

According to its derivation, the word means foresight, but, when ascribed to God, it is clothed with a larger sense, *viz.*, the preservation and government of the whole world, and especially of the Church. Some good divines have treated of conservation and providence separately, but our Article includes both, and its title must be taken to cover both. It is an attempt to group together all our leading conceptions of God in relation to the world and to history—His upholding all created things, preserving and sustaining all the creatures according to the laws of their being, and disposing and governing the whole course of events. The Westminster Confession has a similar comprehensiveness in its declaration that “God doth uphold, direct, dispose, and govern all creatures, actions, and things, from the greatest even to the least, by His most wise and holy providence, according to His infallible foreknowledge, and the free and immutable counsel of His own will”.

Our Article states God's relation to (1) all things; (2) all creatures; (3) all events. Then it ends with two provisions, disclaiming two injurious inferences.

I. “*God the Creator upholds all things by the word of His power.*”—The Creatorship is mentioned in order to show how there comes to be any world at all; and thus the affirmation that He Who created ever after upholds or sustains, is brought in to explain how it is the world, once made and

set in order, does not fail or collapse. It has no self-sustaining independence ; but God keeps it in being moment by moment, age after age. At the same time this action of God is not a continuous creation, but a continuous maintenance of the substance and order of the world by Him "in Whom all things consist".

II. "*Preserving and providing for all His creatures, according to the laws of their being.*"—We are not to suppose that Elohim started the animate world at the first, and then left it to manage itself as it best could, and sustain, propagate, or destroy the life which He had given. On the contrary, He has never ceased to watch over the animate world, and to direct and influence its development ; and this applies to all the creatures, whether plants or animals, in their several genera and species—their distribution, their propagation, and their adaptation to their environment.

The clause "*according to the laws of their being*" is added as an acknowledgment that the divine providence over the creatures is not a series of arbitrary volitions which cannot be anticipated or foreseen, but observes laws or orderly processes, which the observant mind may perceive. These are the laws of nature which, on the great scale, include the conservation of matter and force in the universe, and, on the particular scale, provide for the life and health of each kind of God's creatures according to its structure, constitution, and appointed place in the vast economy of the world. In the institution and maintenance of these laws we discern the boundless and faultless wisdom of God.

This clause carries with it important practical lessons. It excludes vain hopes, and condemns unreasonable prayers. God does not preserve or provide for this creature or that by irresistible acts of power, nor should we pray or expect Him

to do so. He will not work a miracle to keep a man who falls over a cliff from injury, or to rescue one who drops into deep water and cannot swim from being drowned. He lets the law of our being have free course. And under that law He preserves us through the use of means—for which use we are ourselves responsible. If we pay no heed to the laws and conditions of health, we shall grow weak and ill, and God will not prevent it. If we run foolish risks, and mischief befalls, we suffer—and have only ourselves to blame. Providence takes care of us only according to the law of our being, and, indeed, it would be no kindness but a great calamity if this law were capriciously suspended. There would be no more encouragement to discretion, no more certainty of a retribution for indiscretion and ill-behaviour.

III. "*Through the presence and energy of His Spirit in nature and history, He disposes and governs all events for His own high design.*"—Here we recognise the divine control over all occurrences in the world's annals and in human history—however fortuitous they may appear. Obviously this must cover the actions of conscious as well as unconscious agents: and in the former case the designs, separate or combined, and the motives of action which give shape and character to private and public history. The feelings of His human creatures, good and evil, their passions and plots, their industry or indolence, their competitions and hindrances, their words and works, their improvements and deteriorations, their successes and failures, their peace and war—all are controlled by the Almighty Ruler of the world with a view to the accomplishment of His high design. And the full design is known only to Himself.

In sooth, it is a prodigious conception surpassing all human thought, this fulfilment of a high design through long ages of time, by the operations of nature, and the

vicissitudes of history ; nay, more, by the free agency of millions on millions of human beings, each aiming at his own object, not to speak of the presence and influence of unseen spirits, good and evil. The Being Who wields such a providence must indeed be the All-wise and Almighty. What prevision of fortuitous events and of contingent actions! What power to weave events and tendencies into a whole course of things! What judgment in the balancing of counter influences, and in touching the springs of physical and moral energy!

Again, the doctrine of the Holy Trinity helps us. As the Almighty God created by His Son, so also the All-wise God conducts the providence now described by His Spirit, Whose "*presence and energy in nature and history*" we reverently acknowledge. It is a too common mistake to confine the operation of the Holy Spirit on earth to the enlightenment, consolation, and sanctification of believers. But, anterior to this, there is an immanence of the Spirit of God in what we call nature, and a movement of that Spirit all down the course of history. Wheresoever and whensoever man is divinely guided, influenced, or incited to any moral effort, it is a work of the Holy Spirit.

But again the all-controlling Spirit has respect in every creature to the "law of its being". We have seen that such respect is observed in providing for the safety and continuance of all creatures. It is also observed in the divine providence over events in which the creatures freely take part. They are no puppets or passive instruments ; but feel and act of or from themselves, executing, or at least trying to execute, their own will. More of this by-and-by.

Of this divine disposal and government of all events we have three things to say : (1) It excludes chance ; (2) It repudiates fate ; (3) It encourages prayer.

(1) *It excludes chance or fortune.*—There is no luck, good or bad. On the surface of things there may appear a capricious uncertainty which gives amusement and excitement to certain minds, but to the eye of God no issue is vague or problematical. No joy comes to us, no sorrow befalls but it was known to Him, and foreknown, destined by Him, and predestined.

(2) *It repudiates fate*—blind and aimless. It is a significant fact that a belief in fortune carries with it a belief in fate. The nations that made fortune a goddess dreaded the three fates. Pindar identified fortune with one of the destinies. But the doctrine of providence, which rejects chance, rejects dire necessity also. The living God reigns in righteousness and love, and His rule leaves room for the contingent actions of His responsible creatures. They have all the liberty they need. "Let the earth rejoice!"

(3) *It warrants and encourages prayer.*—The pursuit of luck banishes the devout spirit, and fatalism stifles it. Granted that the Mussulman, who is a fatalist, goes regularly and ostentatiously to prayer, yet he only repeats the statement that "Allah is one," and recites verses from the Koran; he does not make confession or petition, as Christians do, to the Father in heaven. The foundation of what we call prayer is laid in our belief in an ever-present God, ever presiding and providing, Who has all our times in His hand, with control of all the forces which act on events, and power to shape our lives, and those of others, according to His will. Therefore, we appeal to Him to guide and guard us, and to order all that concerns ourselves and others to such results as are best. He knows how and when to interpose, and so, without violating the order of the world or the law of our being, to answer our cry, and help the poor and needy.

The faith in divine providence is a strong consolation to the Christian mind ; yet we cannot help seeing, and have no hesitation in acknowledging, that the doctrine runs out on all sides into mystery, and starts intricate questions, the full solution of which is beyond the reach of our philosophy. No wise or humble man attempts to explain *how* God provides, and governs, and secures His objects, while listening to and granting the prayers of His children, and while leaving His creatures generally to act as they desire and will. But at all events we can protect the doctrine from injurious inferences ; and such is the purport of the two provisoes which wind up this Article.

1. The first has regard to the relation of divine providence to evil in its origin and continuance. "*Yet is He not in anywise the author or approver of sin.*" This is taken from the Westminster Confession. We are not able to show how the Holy One has control of the sinful actions of men, and carries out His purposes through these, and yet remains Himself unspotted ; or why He Who had the power to exclude evil ever permitted its entrance. But it cannot be, it would destroy the very conception of God, that He should be chargeable with the production or with the propagation of evil. And this is the import of our disclaimer.

In four points, the late Dr. Charles Hodge set forth the teaching of Scripture on the divine control over sinful acts of men. (1) These acts are so under the control of God that they can occur only by His permission and in execution of His purposes. (2) The wickedness of man is restrained within bounds which God has prescribed. (3) Wicked actions of men are overruled by God for good. (4) The sinfulness of acts proceeds only from the creature and not from God.

Confessedly there are great perplexities for our reason,

not only in the origin but also in the continuance, propagation and insolence of sin in the face of God's good providence. But, whatever be the explanation of this, we stand to our disclaimer. It cannot be that He Who forbids and punishes sin is Himself in any respect, or in any degree, an author or approver of the thing which He hates.

2. The second disclaimer touches the difficult question of the relation of divine providence to moral freedom, and so to responsibility. It may be alleged against the doctrine of providence, as has often been alleged against that of predestination, that it places both God and man under a yoke of necessity. This we disavow in two clauses:—

(1) As to man's freedom.—“*Neither are the freedom and responsibility of man taken away.*” This phrase also is taken in abbreviated form from the Westminster Confession. All that can be done in the case is to disclaim any inference from the doctrine of providence which would turn human beings into puppets pulled by strings, or blind tools of a resistless purpose not their own. We do not pretend to explain how the foreknowledge and forecasting government of God comprehend in their regard the free will and free activities of His creatures. But our failure to discover the *quomodo* is never a reason for rejecting *quod Sancta Scriptura docet*. Our incapacity to read off the reconciliation between the all-disposing providence of God and the freedom and responsibility of man forms no ground whatever for rejecting either the one or the other in its own place and on its own evidence.

(2) As to God's freedom.—Not even by His own world-plan does the Omnipotent limit His own liberty. So we continue. “*Nor have any bounds been set to the sovereign liberty of Him Who worketh when and where and how He pleaseth.*” We need not dilate on this. Every reverent

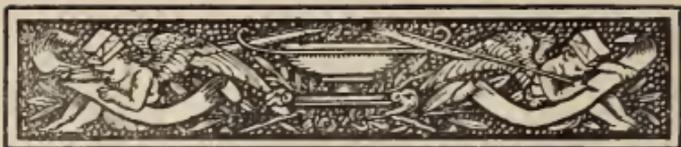
mind will recognise without difficulty that untrammelled freedom must belong to the All-wise and Almighty Ruler of the world. He may not be balked, baffled, or restricted by any conditions whatever, or by any amount of intractableness among His world-subjects. The Lord may and will do all His pleasure; the only qualification of this statement being that He cannot violate His own rectitude, therefore cannot do wrong, cannot lie, cannot act unjustly. But this is no restriction on any liberty that is worthy of God.

We do not attach much importance to the distinction which used to be drawn between general and particular providence. The one contains the other. That God superintends the whole life of the world, and that God cares for one sparrow falling to the ground, are not separate and disconnected truths, but are exhibitions of the same truth. The one impresses by its comprehensiveness, the other by its minuteness of consideration and care. It is not easy to say which is the more impressive of the two.

There is a special providence in the sense of a special divine protection of the faithful in Christ Jesus. It is well put in the Westminster Confession: "As the providence of God doth, in general, reach to all creatures, so, after a most special manner, it taketh care of His Church, and disposeth all things to the good thereof".

In all time this doctrine has been a pillar of comfort to the saints through all their toils and trials. They trusted in God's holy providence, and were not afraid. Let us also turn this Article of the Faith into a strong consolation.

Leave God to order all thy ways,
 And hope in Him whate'er betide;
 Thou'lt find Him in the evil days
 Thy all-sufficient strength and guide;
 Who trusts in God's unchanging love
 Builds on the rock that nought can move.



ARTICLE V.

OF THE FALL.

We believe and confess that our first father, Adam, the representative head as well as common ancestor of mankind, transgressed the commandment of God through temptation of the devil, by which transgression he fell from his original state of innocence and communion with God; and so all mankind, being in him, have come under just condemnation, are subject to the penalty of death, and inherit a sinful nature, estranged from God, from which proceed all actual transgressions: and we acknowledge that out of this condition no man is able to deliver himself.

THE Fall of Man is that which makes both redemption and reformation necessary. Therefore it is one of the chief *desiderata* in a sound theology to have this matter stated accurately according to the Bible, and in harmony with the facts of experience, without exaggeration and without apology.

The statement on this subject in any creed, confession, or table of articles will furnish a very shrewd test of its fidelity on all points that concern salvation. If you find a

religious teacher faltering here, you are sure to find him halting all through, and especially defective in his view of the representative character and remedial work of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Already, under the third Article, we have had the doctrine of man's original state, in the image and favour of his Maker. The present Article shows how he did not continue in that state, but fell from it by disobedience. It deals first with the sad story of Adam, and then with the effect of Adam's sin on his posterity. And in view of the humbling contents of the Article, we begin by saying not merely "we believe," but "*we believe and confess*".

I. OF ADAM'S SIN AND ITS EFFECT ON HIM.—"*That our first father, Adam,*" etc. Thus we go straight to the Bible, and without looking at questions which the speculative intelligence may easily raise, shape the Article simply on the sacred record.

Some will dispute the description of Adam as "*our first father,*" "*the common ancestor of mankind*". They will say that the human race now on the earth is not of one blood or of one origin. We have no objection to the most searching examination of this point by competent persons, and have no fear of the issue. Meanwhile our faith rests serenely on Holy Writ, which refers all human life back to "the first man, Adam". It is also suggested that there were pre-Adamite men on the pristine earth. This is a question of palæontology, and palæontologists have found no evidence of such creatures; but even if the thing were proved beyond doubt, it would not affect our statement, which is that of the human race as we know it, and to which we belong, Adam was the "first father"; or, as the Westminster divines say, "the root of all mankind".

"*The representative head as well as common ancestor.*"—

On the relation of parentage which he bore to the coming race was based the additional one of headship. The Larger Catechism says the same thing in a somewhat peculiar way: "The covenant being made with Adam as a public person, not for himself only, but for his posterity".*

This representation by Adam having turned out badly for us, men protest against it as unjust. We shall have something to say on this further on. Meanwhile let it be considered that the complaint of unfair treatment is just as applicable to our deriving a faulty disposition and temperament from a fallen ancestor, as it is to our being involved in the disobedience of a fallen representative. And indeed there is no end to complaints if men are to call God unjust because their parents were not the best possible people, or because they began life at a disadvantage on account of the unhealthiness, ignorance, or poverty of those who begot and reared them.

True it is, that we ought to read the record of the origin and fall of man with our moral sense awake and alert; and that we should never put force upon conscience to accept as just what it regards as unjust. But at the same time it must not pronounce at all on an imperfect acquaintance with the grounds of divine procedure. In such a case as this our moral sense must refrain from any adverse conclusion; and let the mind fall back on the grand assurance, that the Judge of all the earth has done, does, and will do right.

Having stated the position which Adam held, and the responsibility which he bore, we tell the sad story thus: "*He transgressed the commandment of God through temptation of the devil*". The Larger Catechism says: "Our first

* The Puritan divines also described Christ as "a Public Person" undertaking our salvation. See Dr. John Owen, *On Communion with God*, pt. ii. chap. vi.

parents, being left to the freedom of their own will, through the temptation of Satan, transgressed the commandment of God". It will be observed that our Article traces the fall of man to Adam only; whereas the Catechisms with less accuracy attribute it to the fault of our first parents. No doubt the temptation came to and through Ève, and she was "first in the transgression"; but sin entered into the world through "the one man," not by the woman. Ève was a common ancestor, but not a "representative head" of the human race.

Our Article goes into no detail about the trees of the garden, the wonderful fruit, or the serpent that spoke in human language. And this omission is designed to reserve a reasonable freedom in the interpretation of the narrative in Genesis, so far as concerns its incidents. One man may read these as literal history: another as an allegory of the moral life and its temptation. It matters not, so long as the actuality of Adam's fall is believed, and the story is not reduced to the rank of fable or legend. The irreducible fact, whether told in literal narrative or revealed under the veil of parable or allegory, is that Adam marred his Maker's image and lost his Maker's favour by one act of disobedience; and that he did so under temptation of the devil.

"By one man sin entered into the world." Not only so: it was by one act of disobedience on the part of the one man. He had freedom to obey or disobey as he would; but he was started on his career with every advantage, and every encouragement to obedience. He had no excuse for his sin, for he was solemnly warned of the penalty of disobedience, and being the first of the race he had no inherited fault of character, nor any misleading example.

It is mentioned not as an excuse for Adam's deed but in explanation of it, that he was tempted through his wife by

“that old serpent, the devil”. This is the only mention of that “murderer from the beginning” in our Articles of the Faith: but our readers will do well to study along with this what the Bible says of the tempter in the life of Christ, and in the experience of Christians.

Why the holy God suffered sin to enter at all, and did not restrain the devil from access to our mother Eve, the Bible does not tell. Neither does it explain why God permitted it to enter the ranks of the angels, and to cast down some of them from “their first estate”. The writers of Scripture do not even notice this difficulty of the modern mind. They express no wonder on the point, and offer no explanation. So we must be content for the present to know the terrible fact that sin did enter, and that man is responsible for its entrance, inasmuch as he broke the law of his being, which was the will of his Maker, being tempted thereto by the insinuation of doubt, by the kindling of curiosity and wilful desire, and by a certain impatience of restraint which sprang up in his soul. The result of all which is that “*Adam fell from his original state of innocence and communion with God*”.

II. OF THE EFFECT OF ADAM'S SIN ON HIS POSTERITY.—The effect was disastrous, even tragical, and this because of the relation which Adam bore to the race about to spring from him—representative head as well as common ancestor. The doctrine is laid down on the authority of St. Paul's inspired teaching in Rom. v. 12-19.

(1) “*All mankind, being in him, have come under just condemnation.*”—The expression “being in him” must at this point refer to his representative headship, as well as the hereditary connection, which taken by itself would not warrant condemnation.

The word “just” is inserted, not to affirm that we see or

can demonstrate the justice of this mode of trying and condemning the race, but to express our faith that, whatever judgment God has passed or may pass, must be just, must proceed on grounds which, though imperfectly disclosed to us, are recognised as sufficient by the Supreme Righteousness.

Many persons evade this point altogether, thinking it quite enough to admit "original sin" in the sense of inherent and inherited pravity of disposition.* But this is to regard Adam as ancestor only, and not representative head. And mark how this affects the whole position. It spoils and cripples the antithesis between Adam and Christ, Who surely redeems from condemnation and destruction as well as from sin. Also it is unfaithful to the teaching of St. Paul, who traces to Adam not sin only, but condemnation. "The judgment came of one unto condemnation." "Through one trespass the judgment came unto all men to condemnation."

(2) "*All mankind are subject to the penalty of death.*"— This also rests on St. Paul's teaching: "Through one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin". "By the trespass of the one the many died." "By the trespass of the one, death reigned through the one."

When it is said that death entered the world "by sin," the reference is to man only, and not to other creatures. The notion that human sin brought death on the whole animal creation has no support in the Bible. The question in suspense was whether man, who had dominion over the creatures, would obtain life by obedience, or incur death by disobedience: and Adam's transgression decided the question adversely for himself and for all his posterity. It is now "appointed unto men once to die".

* Dr. Charles Hodge even admitted that this view would satisfy the Calvinistic position.

On this, as on all points, we wish to go as far as Holy Scripture goes, but no farther. The Westminster Confession affirms that in consequence of Adam's sin, we are all "made subject to death with all miseries, spiritual, temporal, and eternal". In like fashion the Shorter Catechism asserts that "all mankind by their fall (*scil.*, in Adam) are made liable to death itself, and to the pains of hell for ever". But *addenda* of this sort, unsupported as they are by Holy Writ, are fitted to damage the truth to which they are appended, and to make it intolerable and incredible. What God said to Adam was: "Dying, thou shalt die". The penalty on the race cannot be heavier than it was on the representative head. No doubt those who have used the severe language above quoted have argued back from the life in Christ. They have inferred from the unspeakable blessings conveyed in that life that the death in Adam must involve misery unspeakable. But the death in Adam is properly contrasted with the life in Adam—not with the life in Christ. And all assertions based on uncertain and ill-balanced inferences, without express support from the Bible, ought to be dropped.

(3) "*All mankind inherit a sinful nature, estranged from God, from which proceed all actual transgressions.*"—This is what has been commonly called "original sin". The ninth of the Thirty-nine Articles says: "Original sin is the fault and corruption of the nature of every man". The language of the Westminster symbols on the point is similar, and very severe. But here again it is important to state the truth firmly, and not to exaggerate.

In such a phrase as "a sinful nature" there is no attempt at metaphysical precision. Properly the nature of man is moral, and what is immoral or sinful in him is a deprivation of that nature. Righteousness is health and order: un-

righteousness sickness and confusion. But the words "sinful nature" are convenient to express that the hereditary tendency or disposition of human nature has been toward evil. The froward and downward tendency is stronger in some men than in others, but in all there is a proneness to estrangement from God, and to a manner of living that cannot please Him.

It is not at all meant that man is a mere lump of vileness. It is not intended to deny or disparage estimable virtues and attributes in human nature. The corruption of the whole, or, as it is sometimes called, "total depravity," means not that man is an out-and-out wicked wretch, half beast, half devil, but that all parts and faculties of his originally upright nature have been injuriously affected by original sin. The root of the mischief is that he has been estranged from God, the fountain of life and purity. Thus the mischief is called "*total* depravity" as tainting the whole nature of man, and "*universal* depravity" as having spread over all mankind and through all generations, alike by the law of heredity, and by the power of moral or immoral contagion.

Human progress, improvement, and advance are the assumptions frequent in the mouths of men; but, so far as these things infer a moral elevation, they are possible only through influences which divine goodness has originated and supplied. The tendency of man, left to his own devices, is to degenerate from the original type—to depart from righteousness and from God. Hence "all actual transgressions".

A grievous and even gloomy doctrine this: but it is only the necessary acknowledgment of the grievous and gloomy facts of human history and experience. Every capable observer has taken note of the facts. The Bible alone has given a clue to account for them.

(4) "*And we acknowledge that out of this condition no man is able to deliver himself.*"—The condition is one of condemnation; and no one can justify himself before God. It is one of liability to death; and no man has "power in the day of death". It is one of sinfulness; and no one can regenerate or sanctify himself.

This is well put in several of the confessions of faith. The Westminster says: "A natural man is not able by his own strength to convert himself, or to prepare himself thereunto". The tenth of the Thirty-nine Articles: "The condition of man after the fall of Adam is such, that he cannot turn and prepare himself, by his own natural strength and good works, to faith, and calling upon God". The first Helvetic Confession: "Original sin so laid hold of the whole human race that, children of wrath and enemies of God, they can be cured by no power except the power of God through Christ".

So we are all shut up under sin: and there is no help for us but the divine remedy announced in the Gospel. Let us stretch out eager hands for this. Sin has reigned unto death: but, lo! grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life. Adam fell; but Christ stands. By the one man sin entered; by the other Man sin is put away.



ARTICLE VI.

OF SAVING GRACE.

We believe and proclaim that God, Who is rich in mercy as well as of perfect justice, was moved by His great love to man to hold forth from the first a promise of redemption, which from age to age He confirmed and unfolded, and that, in the fulness of the time, He accomplished His gracious purpose by sending His Son to be the Saviour of the world: wherefore our salvation out of sin and misery is ever to be ascribed to free and sovereign grace.

THE Article on the Fall of Man we "believe and confess". This, upon Saving Grace, "*we believe and proclaim*". It is the joyful duty of the Church of God to announce and testify His grace to fallen and sinful men. Beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of those who bring these good tidings, and publish peace.

We have seen that the fall of man is too serious in its consequences to admit of self-recovery. "Out of this condition no man is able to deliver himself." It is a case for salvation. Nothing less will do. And "salvation from a higher source flows to the human race". We believe and

proclaim that the God Whose commandments men have broken, and from Whom men are estranged, has brought to them a great deliverance.

"God Who is rich in mercy."—A beautiful expression taken from Eph. ii. 4. God is the Lord and Proprietor of all things, but is never described as rich in possessions. The true wealth of a moral being, from the highest to the lowest in degree, consists in moral qualities of excellence. And God is rich inasmuch as God is good. His first characteristic, as announced by Himself to Moses, is that He is "merciful" (Exod. xxxiv. 6). One of the prophets said of Him: "He delighteth in mercy" (Mic. vii. 18). The New Testament only adds to the overwhelming proof of this. He is rich in this quality of mercy. So with a great love He has loved us.

"As well as of perfect justice."—The ascription to God of this quality, of which something has been said under Article I., has abundant authority from Scripture. The propriety of bringing it in as a balance to the divine mercy in the way of human salvation has been usually recognised by the compilers of Confessions of Faith, and by systematic theologians. The Westminster Confession says: "God, Who is most loving, gracious, merciful, and withal most just". The Belgic: "God, Who is perfectly merciful, and also perfectly just".

We have already affirmed God's "just condemnation" of man's disobedience. It is now important to say that the salvation of man is not brought about by any violation or sacrifice of justice. Help comes from Him Who is "a just God and a Saviour". God is "just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus". This we have from the Bible. We do not say that we can demonstrate the justice of the justification any more than the justice of the condemnation.

The thing is too high for us. But the declaration which we find so explicit on the page of Scripture is sufficient for our faith.

As we proceed to state what the merciful and just God has devised and done for sinful man, be it observed that we refer to salvation only. There is much besides that God has done in His providence and government of the world for the amelioration of the state of man, and for the encouragement of peace and virtue. But our Article is of *saving* grace.

“*God was moved by His great love to man.*”—He was not induced by a Redeemer to love the world, but was induced by His love to the world to designate and send a Redeemer. This thought we have derived from the Bible; and it has become so familiar that it passes for an obvious, almost an axiomatic truth. Yet, in reality, it has not been at all self-evident to the human mind, nor has it been commonly received in any age of the world. The conception of Deity, which has most widely prevailed, never embraced or suggested a supreme and generous love. The gods of the heathen might show favour and even indulgence to their own votaries, but to others indifference at the best, and in many cases vindictiveness and cruelty. The Moslem perpetually invokes God as “most merciful,” but means that He is propitious to “the true believers,” *viz.*, the Mohammedans, not at all that He pities or loves the world of men. The cry from the Muezzin is “Allah is great,” not “God is love”. Even the Hebrews, with all the teaching of the Old Testament regarding God’s merciful nature and His thought for all nations, limited the Holy One in their own minds to the position of a tribal or national Divinity. They did not love the Gentiles, and so were reluctant to think that Jehovah loved them. Even

those Jews who became Christians found it hard to believe that God was the God, and that Jesus was the Saviour, not of the Jews only, but of the Gentiles also.

From the sad epoch of Adam's disobedience, divine mercy and love began to counteract the mischief which sin had brought into the world: but the Redeemer did not appear till after many centuries of preparation. Long ages passed till at last arrived that Christian era, which is called in the Bible, and in our Article, "*the fulness of the time*". But we dwell on the far-reaching purpose and promise of our gracious God:—

"*To hold forth from the first a promise of redemption which, from age to age, He confirmed and unfolded*".—Here the Article follows the old Scottish Confession: "God made unto Adam ane most joyful promise, quhilk promise was repeated and made more clear from time to time". The reference is to the *Protevangelium* in Gen. iii. 15, which predicted a long antagonism of good and evil, and the ultimate triumph of good over evil through a human Deliverer, descended of the woman, but not without suffering—the bruising of the heel. Afterwards this promise was confirmed and more largely unfolded in the types and prophecies of a great Deliverer in Jacob—the suffering but conquering Messiah. And in this revelation of mercy rested the faith of all who had received the promises until the fulness of the time arrived.

"*And that, in the fulness of the time, He accomplished His gracious purpose by sending His Son to be the Saviour of the world.*"—This is the central fact in religion and in history. It is expressed in the most lucid terms by our Lord and His apostles, and it has always been the most prominent thought in Christianity. It is not enough to say that the Son of God was sent to teach righteousness, or to give assur-

ance of a spirit-world, or to be a messenger of good-will and charity. He was sent "to be the Saviour of the world,"—to take away its sin,—to rescue mankind from moral evil and consequent misery. "God sent His Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved."

How this purpose was and is effected subsequent Articles endeavour to state. For the present, we dwell on the great love of God which provided the Saviour, and we shall do well to dwell on it often. So far as the nations have been unenlightened by the Gospel, they have had and still have associations of terror and severity with gods and goddesses. Even in Christendom, where the study of the course of nature and of the reign of physical law is the intellectual fashion, any suggestion of a world-ruler or god makes him inflexible and pitiless, and does not in the least draw the heart to him. Never was there an age that needed more than our age the revelation of God in Christ, which shows to sinful man a truth which no one can read in the face of nature, *viz.*, that God is love. He is "not willing that any should perish".

"*Wherefore our salvation out of sin and misery is ever to be ascribed to free and sovereign grace.*"—[Mark how this concluding clause of Art. VI. balances that of Art. V.]

Grace means the kind favour of God to men—having regard to no merit in them, present or prospective. It is *free*, as being not "strained," or hemmed in by conditions, or exacted as a due, but as flowing spontaneously from the bosom of God. It is *sovereign*, as overcoming all obstacles, controlling all forces, and reigning through righteousness.

To this grace we ascribe the very idea and purpose of salvation, as well as the actual divine mission of our Saviour. The compassion of God yearned over the sin-blighted world.

And then the kindness and love of God to men appeared in the Sent One, Jesus Christ. Of some famous sage or leader of men, we are wont to say that his country and his age produced him, he was the flower of his nation; but no one would think of so accounting for our blessed Lord. His country did not produce Him, and was not proud of Him. His age was out of harmony with Him. The race of Jews and Galileans cannot be said to have effloresced in the Prophet of Nazareth. On the contrary, the most representative men of the nation lightly esteemed and grievously misconstrued Him. In truth, He was from above; and they were from beneath. Though He was of this race, and the Son of David, He dwelt apart, conversed with heaven, and was at home in a spiritual sphere which it had not entered into the hearts of Pharisees or Sadducees to conceive. He had come forth from God, and that in God which sent Him to be our Saviour was "free and sovereign grace".

Not only so. Through all that ensues to us on the mission of the Son of God, all that makes the salvation ours—the operation of the Holy Spirit in us, and the repentance and faith with which we receive the Gospel—grace reigns. That any of the children of man are disposed and enabled to welcome and experience the "great salvation" is due to grace. That they who believe are forgiven and justified is due to grace—so that not one of them may boast. That they who are forgiven and justified are also regenerated and sanctified, and conformed to the image of God's Son, is due to grace. And in all these modes of blessing, the grace is "free and sovereign". So are we taught abundantly in the Epistles of St. Paul. The letter to the Romans explains the justification. The first to the Corinthians was written to those who "are sanctified in Christ Jesus". That to the Galatians teaches adoption in Christ Jesus. That to the

Ephesians shows how men are quickened together with Christ, and traces it to God's "great love". That to the Philippians describes a believer as "apprehended by Christ Jesus". That to the Colossians appeals to the brethren as "raised up together with Christ". And the first to the Thessalonians says: "God appointed us not to wrath, but unto the obtaining of salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for us".

Thus from many sides and in divers aspects and effects this inestimable blessing of divine salvation is viewed, and over all we have this holy laud to sing—our fathers sang it, and we shall transmit it to our children—"Grace, grace, unto it!"

This ascription of all the blessing to the divine favour does not make human endeavours needless or nugatory. Neither does it put any slight on good works. Only it puts them in their proper place as the results and evidences, not the ground of our salvation. Nothing is more certain than that, by the reign of grace, the interests of virtue and the obligations to obedience, far from being weakened, are powerfully promoted and secured.

Nor is any wound given to a just self-respect. This feeling makes us unwilling to accept many favours from a fellow-man. Yet much depends on the style of person who is willing to be our benefactor. Some men there are to whom you cannot be obliged or indebted without a sense of humiliation. There are others from whom you can accept repeated gifts of kindness without hesitation or any loss of self-respect. But there is no room for these distinctions and scruples when we are dealing with God for salvation. What He freely provides and bestows we should promptly receive, and give God thanks. Who can feel it derogatory to his nature or dignity to be indebted for eternal salvation to

the same Supreme Being from Whom he has derived the breath of life, and by Whose daily providence he has been laden with benefits? "Salvation to our God Who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever."

Hallelujah!
Grace shall reign eternally.



ARTICLE VII.

OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

We believe in and confess, with the ancient Church, the Lord Jesus Christ, Who, being the eternal Son of God, became man by taking to Himself a true body and soul, yet without sin, being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, and born of the Virgin Mary; so that He is both God and Man, two whole perfect and distinct natures, the divine and the human, being inseparably joined together in one person, that He might be the Mediator between God and man, by Whom alone we must be saved.

“ We believe in and confess the Lord Jesus Christ.”—That we “believe in” Him is a declaration of personal adherence of heart and soul to Him, and goes beyond a statement concerning Him which we accept as true. Then, remembering that belief in the heart ought to be accompanied by confession with the mouth, we confess our Lord before men. (See Rom. x. 9-11; St. Luke xii. 8, 9.)

“ With the ancient Church.”—Here again, as in the second Article, we go back to those early centuries of the Church in which the doctrine of the Person of Christ and

that of the Holy Trinity were exhaustively discussed and conclusively settled. We really have nothing to add to, nor any change to suggest in, the mature conclusions of the Fathers, and of the Nicene and Apostolic Creeds. Here at all events Christendom always has been, and still is, at one. Greek Church, Latin Church, Coptic Church, Armenian Church, Lutheran Churches, Reformed Churches—on these cardinal truths we all agree.

The proper designation of our Redeemer is "the Lord Jesus Christ". It is given in this Article with intentionality, and it would be well if certain Christians, who freely and familiarly talk of "Jesus" and discuss "Christ," would adopt this more reverential style in referring to the only-begotten Son of God.

"*Jesus*," the human personal name, not uncommon among Jews, but bestowed on the Holy Child by direction of an angel, with emphatic reference to its meaning as Healer or Saviour.

"*Christ*" or *the Christ*, a title to denote that He Who bore it was the promised Messiah, the Anointed of God, the Hope of Israel. No one ever disputed our Saviour's right to be called Jesus; but the whole strife regarding Him in His own nation was on the question whether He (Jesus) were the Christ or no.

"*Lord*": because God has highly exalted Him. He is Lord of the dead and living. He is Lord of all. The testimony of the Church from its very inception has been that God has made Jesus Who was crucified both Lord and Christ.

It will thus be seen that it is necessary as well as seemly to use here the full designation of our Saviour. Without it, the confession would be lame.

The object of this Article is to lay down briefly and categorically the doctrine of Holy Scripture regarding the Person

of the Lord Jesus Christ, a doctrine which, one needs hardly say, is absolutely fundamental to Christianity. The efficacy of His atonement and the glory of His love rest on His unique and sublime personality. He suffered for us. He loves us. But who is He?

"Being the eternal Son of God."—Before our Saviour appeared on earth, before He was either Jesus or Christ, He was "the Son in the bosom of the Father". He had glory with the Father before the foundation of the world. We are justified in using the expression "eternal Son of God," because the relation of Fatherhood and only-begotten Sonship inheres in the eternal Godhead. We do not try to imagine how this can be, knowing well that all that pertains to never-beginning existence is too high for us. But what is revealed we believe and confess. Our Saviour was "declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead" (Rom. i. 4; Ps. ii. 7); but He was the Son of God before He became the Son of David (Rom. i. 3). It was announced by the Angel Gabriel to the Blessed Virgin that her child should "be called the Son of the Highest". "That holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (St. Luke i. 32, 35). But we know that He was the Divine Son before His incarnation. God sent not One to become His Son either by nativity or by resurrection. He sent "His own Son" (Rom. viii. 3). "He gave His only-begotten Son" (St. John iii. 16). Our Lord was the first-begotten from the dead, but the Only-begotten from eternity.

"The Son of God became man."—"The Logos became flesh" (St. John i. 14). A wonder of wonders. That a man might be exalted to some supermundane sphere and deified was a thought not unfamiliar to the ancient world; but that any Being properly divine should become human, and yet

continue none the less divine, is an altogether unique conception. We do not forget the so-called incarnation of Hindoo gods, but these afford no parallel to the Christian doctrine. The alleged avatars of Vishnu, for example, are mere legendary assumptions of various animal forms for a time—a fish, a boar, a tortoise, a man with the head and paws of a lion, a Brahmin, a warrior, etc. In order to express the results of the holy incarnation and nativity, Christianity has invented the title *Theanthropos*, God-man.

The ancient Church had quite as much controversy over the humanity as over the divinity of Jesus Christ. And the faith of the modern Church must be so instructed that neither of these two may veil or abridge or invade the other. On the one hand there must be an unwavering belief in Christ's true Deity, on the other a thoughtful and sustained conviction of His proper humanity. Otherwise there is no small danger of constructing in the imagination a Being who is neither God nor man, but something between.

With a view to bring out the genuineness and fulness of our Lord's humanity, we introduce the words: "*Taking to Himself a true body and soul*".

"*True body*" contradicts the ancient heresy of *Docetism*, which ascribed to the Divine Saviour only the semblance of a body. The Scripture teaches that His frame was consubstantial with those of other men. "Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same."

"*And soul*."—The Westminster standards, following the ancient Council of Chalcedon, say "reasonable soul," to affirm that our Lord had human reason, as well as human life (*psyche*). The explicit mention of soul as well as body in describing His humanity is levelled at another ancient heresy—that of Apollinaris, which has been heard in our

own time also, to the effect that Christ had no human reason, but was simply the Divine Logos dwelling in a human body. It will at once be seen that the notion destroys the whole doctrine of His humanity, and denies that He is really our brother-man. It therefore spoils for us the lesson of His example, and far from simplifying the interpretation of His history, throws it into confusion, for it can give no explanation of those passages in the Gospels which ascribe to Jesus Christ human thought and affections, or that in which He described His soul as "exceeding sorrowful".

"*Yet without sin.*"—He was "holy, harmless, undefiled". Sin is no element in human nature, but a blot upon it, and a plague within it. The Son of God assumed humanity in all its proper elements without this blot or plague. It was our humanity with its liability to suffering and to weariness indeed, but without its evil taint. The Man Christ Jesus was not implicated in original sin. He carried within Him no shrinking from God, no proneness to disobedience. His integrity was assailed but never shaken. He was much tried—indeed tempted in all points as we are—but yielded nothing to the tempter. His most bitter adversaries could not convict Him of a fault; and it is evident that, though meek and lowly in heart, He had no consciousness of having ever sinned. This is all the more significant when we consider that, in His ministry, He was constantly awakening the sense of sin in the hearts of others, calling them to repentance, and pronouncing forgiveness, and yet He never confessed sin on His own part, or sought forgiveness from either God or man.

It was only One Who "knew no sin" that could be "made sin for us".

"*Being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, and born of the Virgin Mary.*"—These words declare how "the Son

of God became man". He did not veil Himself in humanity by a mere act of power, and walk the earth a full-grown man ; but He deigned to enter by the ordinary gate appointed for the children of men. As we have it in the *Te Deum* : He " did not abhor the Virgin's womb ".

" *Conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost.*"—Theologians speak of the Miraculous Conception of our Saviour, and such it is in the sense of being above all natural experience, and impenetrable to all " physical reasonings ". It is a hidden thing of God's power, and believed by us because, though the manner of it be unknown to us, the fact of it is clearly revealed in the Gospels (St. Luke i. 31-35 ; St. Matt. i. 20). John the Baptist was " filled with the Holy Ghost even from his mother's womb " ; but the Child of the Blessed Virgin was formed in the very womb by the Holy Ghost. He was thus " the Son of Man " yet not the son of a man. " Wherefore (said the angelic annunciation) that which is to be born shall be called holy, the Son of God."

" *Born of the Virgin Mary.*"—Theology speaks of this as the Holy Nativity. [Distinguish between the terms incarnation, annunciation, conception, nativity, advent.] We are not to attempt refinements on this statement, or represent the mother as a mere vessel or channel through which a Divine Child came into the world. Whatever an ordinary child derives from his parents, whether in physique, intelligence, or temperament, we assume that the Child Jesus derived from Mary of Nazareth, only with the proviso already intimated, that He inherited no evil.

It is all the more necessary to state with fulness the relations of the mother to our Lord's humanity, because we must enter a protest against language which connects her unduly with His divinity. On the ground that her Holy Child has

a divine as well as a human nature, the orthodox Greek Church called the Blessed Virgin *Theotokos*; and the Latin Church insists on her being addressed as "Mother of God". To put it as mildly as possible, this is a rhetorical exaggeration, because Mary could be only the mother of the humanity which was taken into one Person with the divinity by an ineffable grace. But we must put the case more strongly. It is a very mischievous exaggeration, because it is used to sustain belief in such fables as the immaculate conception of the Virgin and her bodily assumption into heaven, as well as to encourage and justify constant appeals to her in prayer as though she were a goddess.

"So that He is both God and Man, two whole perfect and distinct natures being inseparably joined together in one person."—Having stated our belief that the Son of God came into the world and became man, we treat of the person so constituted. In that person are joined together two natures—whole natures—perfect and distinct. We may not say that somewhat of the nature of God and somewhat of the nature of man, each the complement of the other, are combined in Jesus Christ; for then would He be neither God nor man, but an inconceivable amalgam of the two. But He is God without defect, and man without defect. The Thirty-nine Articles and the Westminster Confession concur in using the phrase "two whole and perfect natures".

The effect of the Incarnation was to join these natures inseparably in one person: and to join them without merging one in the other, or mingling the two in one composite nature, for they are still distinct as well as "whole and perfect". This is known to theology as the "Hypostatic Union"—a technical term to denote the joining of two natures in one person, or *hypostasis*. This was most carefully defined by the Council of Chalcedon

(A.D. 451). "One and the same Christ; to be acknowledged in two natures, inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably; the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each being preserved, and concurring in one person and one subsistence (hypostasis)." Such exactness in doctrine may to some minds appear to be irksome or over-ingenious; but it is reached by a careful deduction from Scripture, it was rendered necessary in order to exclude erroneous opinions, and it is immensely helpful if not indispensable to an understanding of the Gospel history. Without it, who can account for the way in which the Son of God was affected by outward incidents, or the language which He used regarding current and future events? Without it, who can explain how the Theanthropic Person was born, and yet could be born of woman only in respect of humanity; how He suffered as human, how He knew the hearts of all men as divine? We maintain that the doctrine of the two natures in one person inseparably joined, yet each of them retaining its own properties, the person so constituted having no double consciousness or complex life, but thinking, feeling, speaking, and acting without confusion, ambiguity, or inward distraction; this doctrine is the key to unlock problems in the biography of our Lord, which are otherwise extremely perplexing, if we may not say quite inexplicable.

"That He might be the Mediator between God and man."
—Here we state the office for which Jesus Christ was qualified by the unique constitution of His person. Moses was a mediator between Jehovah and the Tribes of Israel: but Jesus Christ, greater than, though like unto, Moses, intervenes between God and man—all mankind. Moses, however zealous for Jehovah, was only a servant: but

Jesus Christ is the Son ; in union with God in His divine nature, and in union with mankind in His human nature.

What need have we of other mediators ? Why appeal to the Blessed Virgin, the apostles, or departed saints ? Is it that they may mediate between us and our Lord ? We do not need them for that purpose, since our Lord is of our flesh and blood, not ashamed to call us brethren ; and we know that in the days of His flesh He was more considerate and accessible to supplicants than the apostles were. It is between us and the one God that a Mediator is required—and “One Mediator” has been provided (1 Tim. ii. 5). What can be better for a sinful man than to put his case into the hands of “the Man Christ Jesus” ?

“*By Whom alone we must be saved.*”—For this we have the authority of the Apostle Peter at Jerusalem (Acts iv. 12). The eighteenth of the Thirty-nine Articles affirms it thus : “Holy Scripture doth set out to us only the name of Jesus Christ, whereby men must be saved”.

Note the progress of our closing statements. In Article V., having confessed the fall of man, we acknowledge that “out of this condition no man is able to deliver himself”. In Article VI., we affirm that “salvation out of sin and misery is ever to be ascribed to free and sovereign grace”. In Article VII., we take another step forward, and having declared who and what Jesus Christ is, proclaim that “by Him alone we must be saved”.

This does not say or mean that none can be saved except those who know the doctrine of Christ and consciously believe in Him. In that case all infants must perish ; and no one of the hundreds of millions who have never heard of Christ can possibly be saved ; two assertions which no one will venture to make. But it is meant that all those, whether infant or adult, who are saved, owe it

to Jesus Christ, the Mediator between God and man: and that those who hear of Him and refuse to be saved by Him cannot be saved at all.

It is faith in Him as the Saviour which has formed the Church, sustained the martyrs, fired the souls of the missionaries, brought peace to the hearts and brightness to the lives of a great multitude that no man can number.



ARTICLE VIII.

OF THE WORK OF CHRIST.

We believe that the Mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ, being anointed with the Holy Spirit to proclaim and set up the Kingdom of God among men, did by His perfect life on earth, through words and deeds of grace, and by His death upon the cross, declare the Father, Whose image He is ; and did fully satisfy divine justice, and obtain for us forgiveness of sins, reconciliation to God, and the gift of eternal life, through His obedience on our behalf to the law and will of His Father, even unto death, wherein, bearing our sins, He offered Himself up a sacrifice without spot to God.

THE title of this Article is warranted by our Lord's own description of His entire intervention as a Saviour : "I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do".

"We believe that the Mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ."— It will be observed that the designation of the Saviour is continued from the seventh Article. And the whole of the teaching under that Article must be carried forward into this. Without the doctrine of "the Person" no one can understand the doctrine of "the Work".

“*Being anointed with the Holy Spirit.*”—We have seen that the Lord was qualified to be the Mediator by the union of two natures in Him—the divine and the human. Now, it is added that on the God-man so constituted came this further qualification—the anointing, or, as it is otherwise expressed, the baptism with the Holy Spirit. And this is denoted by His title, “Christ, the Anointed”. The authority for this statement will be found in St. Matt. iii. 16 ; St. Luke iv. 17-21 ; St. John iii. 34, vi. 27 ; Acts iv. 26, 27, x. 38.

We now proceed to describe the work for which our Lord was qualified and sent by the Father, until and inclusive of His suffering on the Cross. It is one work : but it may conduce to clearness of conception if we treat of it under two aspects, or in two parts. The one is the declarative work ; the other the propitiatory and redemptive. The former is on God’s behalf, directed toward man ; the latter is on man’s behalf, directed toward God.

I. THE DECLARATIVE WORK.—“*Being anointed to proclaim and set up the Kingdom of God among men.*”—The Kingdom of God, or of Heaven, has much prominence in the Gospels ; much less in the Epistles, which have more to say of the Church and the Churches. The phrase, indeed, comes from the Old Testament—the great idea of which is the Theocracy in Israel. “Jehovah was king in Jeshurun.” In the New Testament the idea receives enlargement and elevation. The Kingdom of God left the restriction of land and race, and became a blessing to the world.

The new era was announced by the preacher in the wilderness, who cried : “The kingdom of heaven is at hand”. Then Jesus of Nazareth took up the strain, and went through cities and villages of Galilee “preaching the

Gospel of the kingdom". After He rose from the dead He still taught the apostles "the things concerning the kingdom of God". For this, which was announced in "the days of His flesh," was to be "set up" in the power of His resurrection. It is not synonymous with the Church. It is not an external institution at all; and so the unregenerate cannot see it (St. John iii. 3). It is the supremacy of the Divine Will ruling the earth in righteousness; and the privilege which it confers on those who enter it, and are faithful to it, is nothing else than the privilege of being good. "The kingdom of God is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." It is "not in word, but in power".

But so long as men entertain unworthy and unlovely thoughts of God they cannot appreciate or welcome His kingdom. Therefore our Article is careful to say that the Lord Jesus Christ "*declared the Father, Whose image He is*". This statement rests firmly on St. John i. 18; xvii. 6, 26.

When Jesus Christ came into the world, men were sadly ignorant of God. No one had seen Him. The heathen acknowledged a Father of gods and men; but there was nothing in him to attract love, or even command moral respect. The Jews had the Old Testament revelation of Jehovah, but failed to apprehend His great fatherhood. Indeed, the conception of God which held possession of the more religious Jews—the Pharisees—was that of a self-asserting and punctilious potentate, who was supremely concerned about obtaining his due quota of ceremonious tributes and sacrifices. Jesus Christ made a new era in history by revealing God as the Father righteous and merciful—His Father and our Father. This is a divine discovery which draws the hearts of men to God, and makes His kingdom an object of their desire—"Our Father! Thy kingdom come!"

The clause "*Whose image He is*" helps us to understand how it was that Jesus Christ declared to men the Father. It is not a case of withdrawing a curtain or lifting a cloudy veil and showing a Deity enshrined. Our Lord showed the Father by exhibiting in Himself the moral image of God. Those who saw Him saw the Father. Those who heard His words heard the words of the Father. Many prophets had uttered messages from God, but only the Son of His bosom could declare Him, as His express image and living Word. This was "God manifest in the flesh".

It is still further affirmed that our Lord made this declaration of the Father "*by His perfect life on earth, through words and deeds of grace, and by His death upon the cross*".

1. In Life.—Christ's was a "perfect life," above all human levels of excellence, and showed that He had "come forth from God". The words of grace spoken in that life were such as never man spake. They were of and from the Father, as He said: "My teaching is not Mine, but His that sent Me," "As the Father taught Me, I speak these things". So also His deeds were works of the Father rich in mercy. "The Father abiding in Me doeth His works." In the fourth Gospel especially we see the Saviour profoundly conscious that all His activities in word and deed were expressions of the Father ever with Him. And it is certain that in these ways the life of Jesus Christ has conveyed to human hearts a conception of the God of all grace and Father of all mercies, such as, without this declaration, the world had never known.

2. In Death.—The declarative aspect of the Cross is not its only aspect, but it is one never to be overlooked. In the dying of the Lord Jesus the love of God is commended to us, and His righteousness declared (Rom. iii. 25, v. 8). So says St. Paul, and St. John to the same effect shows the

divine love displayed not merely in the mission of the Son of God, but in His "propitiation for our sins" (1 John iv. 9, 10).

II. THE PROPITIATORY AND REDEMPTIVE WORK.—

Here we enter on a more difficult region of thought, and must walk circumspectly over the still warm ashes of many controversies. We profess belief that the work of Jesus Christ on our behalf had certain results and effects towards God, and that blessings of salvation are obtained for us by His life-obedience and death-sacrifice. It is easy to misstate this doctrine, and so to raise a prejudice against it. Let us beware of erring, either by exaggeration or by defect.

1. *Of the benefits procured for us by the work of Christ.*

—(1) "*He did fully satisfy divine justice.*"—Such is the language of the Reformed Confessions, more particularly the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic and Scottish Confessions, and the Westminster Confession and Catechisms. The term "satisfy" is of course to be taken in a juridical sense. It is not to gratify a wish, but to meet a demand in full. Sometimes this has been represented as the payment of a heavy debt which mankind-sinners had incurred; but though this may be in some respects a useful illustration, we rather avoid it on the ground that it is apt to introduce too narrow and mechanical a conception both of the work of Christ and of the exigency of man. Our doctrine is that the justice of God has pronounced against us, and imposes upon us the death-penalty for sin. But Jesus Christ has for us "satisfied divine justice". By which we mean that the divine justice has not been defeated, or pushed aside, but "the Righteous One" has suffered for "the unrighteous". One Whose divine appointment to this service and Whose intrinsic perfectness give to His intervention an ineffable

value and significance, has died for us, and expiated our sins. To this nothing can be added; nothing need be added. Satisfaction means "enough done". The sufferings of Christians are chastisements for their profit. The suffering of Christ was satisfaction to the justice of God.

(2) "*He did obtain for us forgiveness of sins, reconciliation to God, and the gift of eternal life.*"—Not that God was unwilling to bestow those benefits on man till Christ won His consent, but a great moral obstacle blocked the way of mercy—the requirements of supreme justice demanding that such blessings should not be imparted except on the ground of an adequate propitiation for the world.

The "*forgiveness*" is of all sins. If any offences are never pardoned it is not from defect in the work of Christ, but from failure on the part of the sinner to confess and forsake them.

The "*reconciliation to God*" is the reversal of that alienation from Him, and even enmity to Him, which dwells in sinful hearts. The Second Helvetic Confession said: "Our Lord reconciled the Heavenly Father to all believers," with which statement agrees the second of the Thirty-nine Articles: "To reconcile His Father to us". Earlier still we find it in the Augsburg Confession: "That He might reconcile the Father unto us". But those symbols (*e.g.*, the Shorter Catechism) are more in harmony with Scripture language which speak of our being "reconciled to God" (2 Cor. v. 18-20; Rom. v. 11). This is our duty; but none the less is it a privilege or benefit which Christ has procured for us—"peace with God".

"*And the gift of eternal life.*"—This, which is so prominent in the New Testament, is strangely omitted from most of the symbolical documents of churches. The everlasting life in heaven is recognised, but not that eternal life which,

according to Scripture, is God's present gift to us in Jesus Christ. Only the Heidelberg Catechism describes it as the object of our Lord's passion "to obtain for us the grace of God, righteousness, and eternal life". And the Belgic Confession shows that through the crucified and risen Son of God "we obtain immortality and life eternal". This blessing implies newness of life planted in Christ, indistinguishable because Christ lives for evermore, and growing stronger and more abundant through the supply of His Spirit. "The witness is this, that God gave unto us eternal life, and this life is in His Son" (1 John v. 11).

The blessings now spoken of are not obtained *by* us till we believe on the Son of God. Not till then do we enter into the possession and experience of them. What this Article affirms is that they were obtained *for* us by Jesus Christ in His life and death on earth long centuries ago. It is due to His work finished on our behalf that God all down these centuries has pardoned, reconciled, and quickened the sinful sons of men.

2. *Of the means whereby our Redeemer obtained such results.*—In this, as in the former aspect of His work (p. 86), we view Him in life and in death.

(1) *In Life.*—"Through His obedience on our behalf to the law and will of His Father."—This is what divines have called the "active obedience" of Christ, as distinguished from passive obedience or submission to suffering. It was rendered to the Divine Law, inasmuch as He was "born under the law" and fulfilled all its righteousness. And it was rendered to His Father's will, apart from the precision of law; for Jesus Christ consulted the Father day by day and did always the things which pleased Him.

Be it observed that this obedience was rendered, not only as a pattern to us of what our lives should be, but "on our

behalf," by our Representative and Saviour. Therefore in St. Paul's teaching it is set in contrast with Adam's disobedience. "For as through the one man's disobedience many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One shall the many be made righteous" (Rom. v. 19).

With so clear an apostolic statement on the subject we can dispense with extracts from creeds and confessions. But it is only candid to say that, excepting the text now quoted, we do not find a marked distinction drawn in Holy Writ between the active and the passive obedience or between the obedience and the sufferings of Christ. He obeyed in suffering, and He suffered in obedience. All His active compliance with the divine commands was rendered in "the state of humiliation". The doing and the dying form one "work". It is, therefore, not judicious or even warrantable to draw an absolute line of separation between the benefit obtained by the obedience of our Lord and the benefit procured by His suffering, as some rigid divines have attempted to do.

(2) In Death.—"*Even unto death, wherein, bearing our sins, He offered Himself up a sacrifice without spot to God.*" --The obedience continued unto, or until, the death, and was completed therein, for it was in regard to the surrender of His life that our Lord said: "This commandment received I from My Father".

The explanation of His death is given in terms carefully culled from the Scriptures. And it is satisfactory to note how clearly and pointedly the same doctrine has been expressed in venerable church documents. The oldest creeds are meagre at this point, because controversy on "the Atonement" had not yet begun; but the symbolical books of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are very explicit in their statements. The Augsburg Confession, followed herein by the

Thirty-nine Articles, affirms the death of Christ to have been "a sacrifice not only for original guilt, but also for all actual sins of men". The Scottish Confession describes it as "a voluntary sacrifice offered for us"; the French Confession as "the perfect sacrifice offered on the cross"; the Heidelberg Catechism as "the only atoning sacrifice"; and the same language will be found in the Confession and Catechisms of Westminster. None of the churches has ever been content with the merely exemplary view of the suffering of Christ, or with any theory of impressive moral exhibition.

The clue to the doctrine is in the sacrificial ordinances of the old Dispensation, when sins were confessed on the head of an animal brought to the altar, and remission was accorded through shedding of blood. The Epistle to the Hebrews shows that the death of Christ was on this wise, and for this end; that it was the anti-type to those types, with a virtue and value unspeakably higher and more enduring.

Let the attention be fastened on three points:—

(a) He was "*without spot*".—The lambs slain on the altar of burnt-offering were required to be without blemish, because they were typical of the spotless Lamb of God. If Jesus Christ could have been convicted of sin, if even one spot could have been detected in His character or life, He would have been disqualified for the altar; He might have died a martyr but could not have been accepted as a sacrifice. He "knew no sin" Who was "made sin for us".

(b) He "*bare our sins*".—Beyond dispute this is the doctrine of Isaiah liii., and 1 Peter ii. 24. In the latter passage it is immaterial whether we read "bare them on the tree," or "carried them to the tree". What we insist upon is that Christ crucified was the Sin-bearer. With His own consent He was made and held penally responsible for our sins, and died in order to obtain their pardon and removal.

(c) "*He offered Himself up a sacrifice to God.*"—What is meant is an expiatory sacrifice. There is a talk of sacrifice much in vogue in modern days which interprets the death of Christ as a sacrifice on the part of God, made with the view of showing to man the sublimity of self-surrender for the good of others. Now we do not forget the power of our Lord's meek suffering to impress the human heart with lessons of patience and unselfishness. And we attach vital importance to the sanctifying power of the cross, by which we are "crucified with Christ". But our business at present is with the death of the Sin-bearer in order to our salvation. And it was a sacrifice not by God for our learning, but to God for our deliverance. We do not argue the matter—but rest on the word of Scripture: "Christ gave Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for an odour of a sweet smell" (Eph. v. 2).



ARTICLE IX.

OF THE EXALTATION OF CHRIST.

We believe that Jesus Christ, being for our offences crucified, dead, and buried, saw no corruption, but was raised again on the third day, in Whose risen life we live anew, and have the pledge of a blessed resurrection; that in the same body in which He rose He ascended into heaven, where, as our High Priest, He maketh continual intercession for us; and that He sitteth at the right hand of God, Head of the Church, clothed with authority and power as Lord over all.

THE exaltation of our Saviour, considered as an upward movement, starts from the lowest depth of His humiliation—"the dust of death". Adopting the familiar phraseology of the Apostles' Creed: "He was *crucified, dead, and buried*"—we prefix the significant words *for our offences*, carrying forward the doctrine already confessed in the eighth Article as to the expiatory character and virtue of the sufferings of Christ.

After the word "buried," we have not thought it necessary to add the next clause in the Apostles' Creed: "He descended into hell". There is no such statement in the

Nicene Creed : nor was this clause in the original draft of the Apostles'. It was added by the Latins in a form for which we find no support in the Bible : "*Descendit ad inferna*".

It is a fair question whether this clause should not be struck out or dropped from the creed when it is recited in public worship. The alternative is either to omit it altogether, or to read hell not as the place of woe, but simply as *hades*, the abode of the dead. The former course is rather a drastic mode of treating words so familiar to Christendom ; and the latter is quite sufficient to satisfy a reader of the Acts of the Apostles. We read there that the soul of Christ was "not left in *hades*" ; and we conclude that His soul was there while His body lay in the grave. The Westminster divines, who had no idea of discontinuing the public use of the Apostles' Creed—a use common to all the Reformed Churches—inserted in the margin : "Hades, or continued under the power of death". The matter is of sufficient interest to warrant a quotation from the learned and judicious Bishop of Durham : "He descended into hell—that is, into *hades*, the common abode of departed spirits, not the place of punishment of the guilty. This clause, as we know, has given occasion to much misunderstanding and superstition. It is not found in the earliest creeds, and it is almost peculiar to the West. But . . . it completes our conception of the Lord's death. . . . His body was laid in the tomb, His soul passed into that state in which we conceive that our souls shall enter. He has won for God, and hallowed every condition of human existence. We cannot be where He has not been."*

The exaltation is described in three successive steps—resurrection, ascension, and session in power at the right hand of God. In all the three our Saviour was active.

* Westcott's *Historic Faith*, 2nd ed., pp. 76-77.

- (1) He took His life again, and rose from the dead.
- (2) He ascended up on high.
- (3) He sat down at the right hand of God.

But we are also to remember that God the Father gave to Him this glory as the reward of His obedience, and in token of the acceptance of His sacrifice.

- (1) God raised Him from the dead.
- (2) God highly exalted Him.
- (3) God made Him to sit at His right hand.

It is easy to find all these statements in the New Testament.

I. RESURRECTION.—This is a pillar truth of our religion. If this can be disproved, Christianity totters and falls. But, if this stands, eternal salvation stands with it.

“*Jesus Christ saw no corruption, but was raised again on the third day.*”—First we affirm the exemption of His body from the ordinary law of dissolution following death. And we do so on the ground of emphatic statements to that effect in Ps. xvi. and Acts ii. The Westminster Confession says: “He was buried, and remained under the power of death, yet saw no corruption”. It is not necessary to assume any miraculous prevention or retardation of the usual process of decay. Enough that corruption was obviated by the early restoration of life to the entombed body of our Lord, which, without undergoing dissolution, was revived, and transfigured into a frame adapted to a heavenly and eternal existence—“the body of His glory”. Then the soul, no longer sorrowful, returned from *hades*, and a new life began—life over which death can have no power.

The specific fact that the resurrection was “*on the third day*” is introduced not only to show how there was no corruption, but also to mark how exactly Scriptures are

fulfilled. The sign of the Prophet Jonah pointed to the third day : and so did that saying of Jesus which gave such umbrage to the Jews : " Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up ".

1. Of the evidence of Christ's resurrection.—On what grounds do we believe it?

On the testimony of witnesses who declared that they saw Him, not rising, but after He had risen. There can be no question that He was dead and buried. Not His friends, but His enemies " made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone ". If, after this, He was seen alive, He must have been raised from the dead.

But can we trust the witnesses? Yes, because (1) they knew Him well, and could not be mistaken on the point of identity. (2) They did not expect Him to rise, and therefore were not likely to mistake illusion for fact. (3) They saw Him often, in the morning, the daytime, and the evening, in the house and in the open air, at intervals extending over a space of nearly six weeks, so that they had every advantage for verifying the fact, and correcting a mere hallucination. (4) They were many, and their witness agreed together. (5) They gave their testimony to this fact without delay, and adhered to it at the risk of imprisonment and death. Besides all this, we are strongly confirmed in our faith by the circumstance that a highly-educated Jew of the period (Saul of Tarsus), intensely prejudiced against Christ and the Christians, became convinced that the story of resurrection was true. He was not at all the man to admit an unwelcome conviction without overwhelming proof. He investigated the matter, knew many of the witnesses personally, and became so satisfied and sure that Jesus Christ had risen, that he devoted the rest of his life to the proclamation of the fact, and would

rather have died than disown it. There are other corroborative evidences, too, such as the weekly observance of the first day of the week as the Lord's Day. But enough.

2. Of the efficacy of Christ's resurrection: its value to believers.

(1) For spiritual quickening.—“*In Whose risen life we live anew.*”—This is the great fact of experimental religion, so much emphasised in the Epistles of St. Paul: “I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live”. “God quickened us together with Christ and raised us up with Him.”

Regeneration is a spiritual resurrection from death in sin: and both regeneration and that progressive renewal by the Holy Ghost which follows it are in virtue of the resurrection of Christ, and assume a mystic union between us and our risen Lord. “Christ, Who is our life.”

(2) For our resurrection from the dead.—“*And have the pledge of a blessed resurrection.*”—This is expressed with the greatest clearness in 1 Cor. xv. 20: “Christ hath been raised from the dead, the first fruits of them that are asleep”. More of this when we reach the twenty-second Article.

It may be noted here that both the clauses last commented on are taken from the Heidelberg Catechism, which gives as benefits from the resurrection of Christ (Qu. 45): “We are now by His power raised up to a new life,” and: “The resurrection of Christ is to us a sure pledge of our blessed resurrection”.

II. THE ASCENSION.—“*That in the same body in which He rose He ascended into heaven.*”—The old Scottish Confession is emphatic on the continued identity of the body: “We nothing doubt but the self-same body which was born of the Virgin, was crucified, dead, and buried, and which did rise again, did ascend into the heavens for the accom-

plishment of all things". A similar statement will be found in the Westminster Confession, chap. viii. 4.

This was predicted in Ps. lxxviii. 18 as interpreted in Eph. iv. 8-10. As of old a Hebrew warrior, returning from a successful campaign, might ascend to the citadel on Mount Zion, with spoils of war and rescued captives in his train, so the Lord Jesus went up to heaven a conqueror, "leading captivity captive".

How simply it is related in St. Luke xxiv. and Acts i. ! How simply it occurred ! There was no pomp or ceremony—no chariot of fire such as at the ascension of Elijah—nothing but a green knoll above Bethany and the little group of disciples—and from among them the calm departure through the still air of One Who had a right to say: "I leave the world and go to the Father," and Whose last gesture of extended hands intimated a blessing on those who gazed after Him till He was taken out of their sight. It was a scene for worship and great joy.

"Where (i.e., in heaven) as our High Priest He maketh continual intercession for us."—This is affirmed in Rom. viii. 34, and more fully taught in the Epistle to the Hebrews, which expatiates on Christ's heavenly priesthood and assures Christian worshippers of their salvation to the uttermost on the ground that their High Priest "ever lives to make intercession for them".

We can point to instances of His intercession while on earth—e.g., the prayer for Simon Peter that his faith should not fail; the prayer for the apostles and all who should believe through their word after the Last Supper; and the petition on the Cross: "Father, forgive them". When we try to conceive of His intercession in heaven there is no need to suppose words actually uttered. This cannot be necessary to the interchange of thought and desire between

the Son and the Father, with Whom He is our "Advocate". Enough for us to know that as the High Priest entered for all Israel within the veil, and stood in the Holy of Holies resting his plea with God in Israel's behalf on the sacrifice offered at the altar, so the High Priest of our profession has entered by His own blood into the presence of God for us, presenting our case, seeking our good, and obtaining for us all those spiritual helps and comforts which make up salvation to the uttermost.

It is somewhat remarkable that the Intercession of Christ, so plainly taught in the New Testament, is omitted from many of the creeds and confessions. It is not in the Nicene nor the Apostles' Creed, not in the Augsburg Confession nor the Thirty-nine Articles. It is mentioned, but only named, in the Scottish and the Westminster Confessions; but the Larger Catechism has a full answer to the question: "How doth Christ make intercession?" and the Belgic Confession devotes to the same theme a long article (Art. xxvi.).

III. SESSION AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD.—"*And that He sitteth at the right hand of God.*"—This affirmation rests on Ps. cx. as interpreted in the New Testament; also on such passages in the Epistles as Rom. viii. 34; Eph. i. 20, 21; 1 Peter iii. 22; Coloss. iii. 1.

The mode of speech is taken from what would occur in the palace of an Eastern king, when one raised up to share and wield the royal power would be placed at the right hand of the throne. So, explaining the exaltation of Christ, John Calvin remarks: "You see to what end He is so seated; *viz.*, that all creatures both in heaven and earth should reverence His majesty, be ruled by His hand, do Him implicit homage, and submit to His power. All that the apostles intend, when they so often mention His seat at

the Father's hand, is to teach that everything is placed at His disposal." *

In the Epistle to the Hebrews another explanation is supplied. It is shown that the seating of Christ in heaven confirmed the sufficiency of the sacrifice of Himself which He offered on earth, and was a token of divine acceptance. Here too appears a significant contrast with the usages of the Old Covenant. In the former times, the priest in Israel stood day by day at the altar, offering sacrifices which could not take away sins; and when the annual day arrived for his entrance into the Holiest, he had still to stand, for there was no seat there but the mercy-seat of God which no Aaronic priest might share. But Jesus Christ, having offered one sacrifice for sin, "sat down on the right hand of God". He was qualified to take His place on the throne. This Priest is "over the house of God". See Heb. x. 11-13, 19-21.

"*Head of the Church.*"—The Article does not follow the Westminster Confession and the Scottish divines in calling our Lord "King and Head of the Church"; and for excellent reasons. There is no Biblical authority for the title King of the Church, or for describing the Church as a Kingdom. Nay, it is important to distinguish between the Church of God, which is now being formed by the Holy Ghost, and the Kingdom of Christ, in which He is to come and reign in His glory.

Head of His body the Church: such is the teaching of the New Testament—especially of the Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians. And this is affirmed by all the Churches. It is the joy and strength of the Church militant on earth, that the Head is in heaven, beyond all hazard, incapable of weariness or exhaustion. Hence the

* *Instit.*, bk. ii. chap. xvi. par. 15.

inexhaustible life of the body, by the communication of the quickening Spirit from the Head. Hence the growth of the body (Eph. iv. 16). And hence the guidance and control of the body, which ought to acknowledge no source of spiritual authority but the Head in heaven.

The Westminster Confession has this sentence—not at all superfluous: “There is no other head of the Church but the Lord Jesus Christ”. Earlier confessions—notably the Second Helvetic, the Belgic, and the Scottish—stoutly maintain this as against the Latin doctrine of two heads—the Invisible Who is Christ, and the visible who is the pope. The Church is not a monster with two heads—a higher and a lower. We will not accept a second headship from any quarter. The pope is not head of the Church. The king or queen is not head of the Church. The will of the people is not head of the Church. We maintain not only the real Headship, but also the sole Headship of Jesus Christ.

“*Clothed with authority and power as Lord over all.*”—Our Saviour’s exaltation includes a certain elevated relationship to the whole creation. He is “Head over all,” and “Lord over all,” being invested with all-embracing authority, all-controlling power. All the forces of nature are subject to Him. All the dispensation of providence is committed to Him. All the angels are under His command. To Him every knee is to bow. Him every tongue is to confess.

All this conduces to the security of the Church. Whatever dangers threaten her He can avert. Whatever enemies oppose her He can defeat. Whatever support is needful to her He can supply; for “He is Head over all things to the Church which is His body”.

The second coming of Christ and His judgment of the

world at the last day are sometimes treated of under the heading of the Exaltation:—as, for example, in the Larger and Shorter Catechisms. But these topics we place under separate Articles (Nos. 21, 23). We therefore conclude by simply pointing out on St. Paul's authority, that the present elevation of our Lord is to continue till a grand epoch indicated thus: "Then the end, when He shall deliver up the Kingdom to God, even the Father".



ARTICLE X.
OF THE GOSPEL.

We hold fast and proclaim that God, Who willeth that all men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth, has, by His Son our Saviour, given commission to the Church to preach unto all nations the Gospel of His grace, wherein He freely offers to all men forgiveness and eternal life, calling on them to turn from sin, and to receive and rest by faith upon the Lord Jesus Christ.

IN the four Articles last treated, we have dealt with the great provision which God has made for our salvation in His Son, Jesus Christ. We are now to state the way in which that provision becomes known and available to men. God communicates with us in the Gospel; and we, by believing and obeying that Gospel, receive His great salvation.

In expounding this Article, we cannot make such references as under other Articles to various creeds and confessions, ancient or modern, for not one of them gives a definition or explanation of the Gospel.

Gospel means good-tidings. St. Matthew usually has the

phrase "Gospel of the Kingdom". St. Peter has "Gospel of God". Most commonly St. Paul says "Gospel of God," or "Gospel of Christ"; once "Gospel of peace"; and once "Gospel of the grace of God". It is this last phrase, found in the apostle's speech at Miletus, that has been inserted in our Article.

The fourth Article has described the saving grace of God. The tenth treats of the message of this grace to the children of men.

"We hold fast and proclaim that God, Who willeth that all men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth."—This is simply a quotation from 1 Tim. ii. 4. It is of the same import with the gracious assurance in Ezek. xxxiii. 11: that Jehovah has "no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live". Let us take care neither to exaggerate nor to minimise such Scriptures as these. It is not that God wills or determines to save all men, but that He is willing (*thelo*, not *boulomai*) that all men should be saved, *i.e.*, He has grace and mercy sufficient for all and which He offers to all. On the other hand, the words "all men" should not be grudgingly interpreted as only indicating all sorts and conditions of men. Let us gladly accept and proclaim it in the natural meaning of the phrase, showing that God has no ill-will to any man, but good-will to every one of the human race.

In what manner this divine good-will becomes effectual to the salvation of man is stated at the end of the Article. We must first speak of the emanation of the Gospel from the God of all grace.

"Has, by His Son our Saviour, given commission to the Church to preach unto all nations the Gospel of His grace."—The reference here is to the charge which the Lord Jesus gave to the apostles before His ascension. See St.

Matt. xxviii. 19, 20; St. Mark xvi. 15; St. Luke xxiv. 47; Acts i. 8.

But why does the Article say "to the Church," and not "to the apostles"? For very obvious reasons. In the commission the Lord's presence is promised to the preachers of the Gospel "always, even to the consummation of the age". But the disciples then present were not to live and labour all through the New Testament age. It is evident that the commission was to them and their successors—therefore to the Church of all the centuries, of which the apostles were the representatives and patriarchs. This is confirmed to us by the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles, from which we learn how St. Paul regarded the Gospel as committed to him, and how the brethren, in the lifetime of the apostles, acted on the conviction that they all were witnesses to Christ, and were all bound, as they had opportunity, to propagate the Gospel (Acts viii. 4; xi. 19, 20; 3 John 7). In fact, the New Testament gives no indication of a sacred caste or holy order of preachers. Teaching and ruling are special functions within the Church for her edification and comfort, and these were from the beginning committed to chosen and qualified men; but there was no monopoly of preaching, which is the function of the Church toward the nations. So should it always be. The whole Church should recognise her privilege and duty as charged with the message of divine salvation to the whole world. And the witness of the Church is to be uttered and diffused, not merely by trained and certified preachers, but through the voices and the lives of all the faithful.

The Lord Jesus commanded His servants to announce everywhere the great remedial Gospel as God's message to all the nations. A truly divine conception, far beyond any human imagination of good-will and philanthropy. Even

now, after nineteen centuries of Christianity, men have not hearts large enough to appreciate the breadth and grandeur of this commission. Hundreds of thousands who claim to be in the Church have so little perception of the value of the Gospel to themselves, and so little love to their fellow-men, that they are quite apathetic as to the duty which Christ laid upon His people. They do not at all "love the world" in the sense in which God loves it. They are not at all eager to make disciples in all nations. They make no effort in that direction, bestow no gift, do not even pray with any fervour that the Gospel of divine grace may spread and prevail. How good God is to men! How cold and cruel they are to one another!

But our present business is exposition, not appeal or reproof. The remainder of the Article endeavours to set forth what message the Gospel contains, what it is that God says therein to sinful men. Two words are used which are very familiar in all discussions of this theme: *viz.*, the *offer* and the *call*. They who receive the Gospel for salvation embrace or close with the divine offer, and obey the divine call.

1. The Offer in the Gospel.—"*Wherein He freely offers to all men forgiveness and eternal life.*"—By this we mean that God presents or holds forth these blessings of salvation in His Son with perfect freeness. Appended to the Westminster Confession of Faith is a production of the Assembly of Divines, entitled: "The Sum, and Practical Use of Saving Knowledge". Referring to the "heartly invitation" from God in Isa. lv. 1-5, the divines proceed thus: "The Lord maketh open offer of Christ and His grace by proclamation of a free and gracious market of righteousness and salvation, to be had through Christ, to every soul, without exception, that truly desires to be saved from sin

and wrath". Afterwards, quoting 2 Cor. v. 19-21, they describe a believer as one who "embraces the offer of perpetual reconciliation through Christ".

The day has been when argument had to be adduced in support of the proposition that Christ and His salvation may be warrantably offered to the whole world of mankind-sinners.* But that day is past. It is accepted in all evangelical quarters, that God has made, and that preachers may repeat, an offer of salvation in Christ, free and universal, loving and sincere. Therefore may unbelievers be upbraided with their ungrateful and callous rejection of a salvation which the Gospel has placed within their offer—within their reach.

2. The Call of the Gospel.—"*Calling on them to turn from sin, and to receive and rest by faith upon the Lord Jesus Christ.*"—In brief, the call is to repentance and faith. Such a call from God obviously has the force of a command: and therefore we speak not merely of embracing, but also of obeying, the Gospel.

(1) Repentance.—"*To turn from sin.*"—The necessity for this must be plain to every honest conscience. Divine salvation cannot be *in* sin. It is *from* sin. And repentance is not so much a condition of the salvation as an elementary and indispensable part of it. It is indeed a gift as well as a command of Christ. The desire and the power to turn from sin His Spirit imparts.

Nothing is prescribed as to the degree of poignant feeling with which men should mourn over their sins. To venture on any such prescription is dangerous, as likely to discourage or perplex tender consciences, and to furnish excuses for delay in believing. The call of God is that men should turn to Him from their sins. Sorrow for sin and abhor-

* Boston's Sermon on "The Saviour of the World".

rence of it will always be found in him who so turns to God. But the intensity of such feelings will vary according to temperament: and the thing essential is the turning of the heart and will.

The place of repentance in the preaching of the Gospel and in the entrance on a state of salvation is well stated in the fifteenth chapter of the Westminster Confession: "Repentance unto life is an evangelical grace, the doctrine whereof is to be preached by every minister of the Gospel, as well as that of faith in Christ. . . . Although repentance be not to be rested in, as any satisfaction for sin, or any cause of the pardon thereof, which is the act of God's free grace in Christ, yet is it of such necessity to all sinners that none may expect pardon without it."

(2) Faith.—"*To receive and rest by faith upon the Lord Jesus Christ.*"—This is familiar language. The Westminster divines explained saving faith as "accepting, receiving, and resting upon Christ alone". But the word "accepting" is not very fitting in this relation; and so we follow the Shorter Catechism, which says: "We receive and rest upon Jesus Christ alone for salvation".

In the use of such language, we are on a sure foundation of Scripture. When our Lord was on earth, the question was of receiving Him or receiving Him not. "And as many as received Him, to them gave He the right to become the children of God" (St. John i. 12). To "rest in the Lord" comes down to us from the Psalms, as expressing the quiet recumbence and confidence of souls that believe. It is also suggested and sanctioned by those figures of speech which describe the Lord as a rock, a foundation, a refuge, a strong tower. On Him the weary may lean. In Him the heavy-laden rest.

It is not good news—it is not a gospel—to move a

sinner, to be told that if I try to be a good man, God will ultimately have mercy upon me. How am I to become a good man? How can I change my nature? And what amount of goodness on my part would suffice? Nay; but this is a Gospel: that God loves me, and having no pleasure in my death, freely offers to me forgiveness and eternal life in Christ, and simply bids me repent and believe the record which He has given concerning His Son; in order to which repentance and faith He vouchsafes to me the inward operation of His Holy Spirit. This is, indeed, a message "worthy of all acceptation". Let it not be droned forth as a monotonous song, or qualified and weakened by timid provisoes, but published by a living Church to all the world as God's word of power—God's message of peace.



ARTICLE XI.

OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of life, Who worketh freely as He will, without Whose quickening grace there is no salvation, and Whom the Father never withholds from any who ask for Him : and we give thanks that He has in every age moved on the hearts of men ; that He spake by the prophets ; that through our exalted Saviour He was sent forth in power to convict the world of sin, to enlighten the minds of men in the knowledge of Christ, and to persuade and enable them to obey the call of the Gospel ; and that He abides with the Church, dwelling in every believer as the Spirit of truth, of holiness, and of comfort.

IN many creeds and confessions (as in the Westminster) there is no statement regarding the Holy Spirit other than is contained in the affirmations regarding God and the Holy Trinity. The Apostles' Creed has simply : " I believe in the Holy Ghost ". The Nicene, besides the statement of the

Spirit's divine rank and glory, says that it is He Who vivifies, and that "He spake by the prophets". The "Orthodox Confession of the Eastern Church" (A.D. 1643), following and expanding the Nicene statement, gives a full and valuable exposition of the gifts and operations of the Holy Spirit. Of the Reformed Confessions the only one which does any justice to this theme is the Scottish, which devotes a whole Article (Art. 12) to "Faith in the Holy Ghost," carefully ascribing to Him the regeneration and sanctification of man. Happily the doctrine in our Article is rich and full.

"*We believe in the Holy Spirit.*"—It is a personal expression of belief and trust; being thus in unison with the first Article: "We believe in one living and true God," and with the seventh Article: "We believe in the Lord Jesus Christ". It is not enough to make doctrinal declarations regarding the Divine Father, Divine Saviour, or Divine Comforter. We profess our faith.

Our Article does not affirm the true and proper Deity of the Spirit, because it has been already stated in the Article on the Holy Trinity. It does not even refer to the procession of the Spirit from the Father, as held by the Eastern Church; or from the Father and the Son, as held by the Latin, and by the Lutheran and Reformed Churches; or from the Father through the Son according to a formula suggested for the reconciliation of the East and West. All this we let alone as too obscure in its nature and evidence to be included in a summary of belief. What we do endeavour to describe is the office, the prerogative, and the operation of the Spirit, as distinguished though not separated from the Father and Son in the divine dealings with mankind.

It may assist the understanding and memory to divide the long sentence before us into three parts.

I. CERTAIN GENERAL TRUTHS CONCERNING THE HOLY SPIRIT.

1. *His relation to the highest life.*—To the Spirit we ascribe that quickening energy which regenerates. We quote the Nicene Creed: "The Lord, the Giver of life," not Lord of life and Giver of life, but the Lord Who gives life. God is the living One and the Fountain of life. The Father has life in Himself. So the Son has life in Himself, and is called the Prince of life, the Lord of the living. But the Holy Spirit is the Giver of new life to man; quickens the dead, and enlivens the living. All who are born again are born of the Spirit.

2. *His inworking power.*—The Spirit is God in us renewing, refining, sanctifying in such manner and measure as He deems fit. To indicate this, we have the clause: "*Who worketh freely as He will*". To the same effect the Westminster Confession: "The Spirit worketh when, where, and how He pleaseth". We are not to suppose that He is limited to those methods of which we may have experience, or to those ordinances, whether the Word or the Sacraments, which we know as means of grace. It is not for us to set bounds to the operation of the Holy Spirit, any more than to the mercy of the Father or the saving grace of the Son.

3. *His availability to us all.*—We who are evil give good gifts to our children in answer to their requests; how much more will our Heavenly Father give the good Spirit to them that ask Him! Such was our Saviour's teaching, and in accordance with it we insert the words: "*Whom the Father never withholdeth from any who ask for Him*".

II. THE ACTION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN ALL AGES.

1. "*We give thanks that He has in every age moved on the hearts of men.*"—From Genesis we learn that the Spirit

strove with men before the flood (Gen. vi. 3). In a later Book we read that the sin of Israel in the wilderness was that of grieving God's Holy Spirit (Isa. lxiii. 10). And in all parts of the Old Testament we have indications of movements of the Divine Spirit in contact with human minds and hearts long before the dispensation of the Spirit began.

We do not presume to shut up the movement of the Holy Ghost within any age or nation. He it is Who in all times, and in all countries, has been the fountain of wisdom and goodness. Wherever men have had heavenward thoughts and longings, pure affections, and even "broken lights"—beams from the light ineffable—it is because the finger of God has touched their eyes, and the breath of God has passed over their spirits. They may not have known the Holy Ghost: but the Holy Ghost has known them, and has been pleased to "move on their hearts".

2. "*That He spake by the prophets.*"—This again is an extract from the Nicene Creed; and it rests on the saying of St. Peter in regard to prophecy, that "men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Ghost".

This is claimed in many places for the prophets under the Old Testament. God put His Spirit upon Moses. The Spirit of the Lord spake by David. The Lord God and His Spirit sent Isaiah. And to the same Power was due the rapture of Ezekiel.

The same view of the prophetic gift is continued in the New Testament. See St. Luke i. 67; Acts xxi. 10, 11. And this operation of the Spirit is by no means confined to those whose prophetic words have been preserved in Holy Writ. It is also required to account for all the fresh and powerful utterances of seers, and prophets, and preachers of righteousness wherever they have appeared, although,

in many instances, their words have been forgotten. As Jesus Christ spoke many words which are not written down in the Gospels, so the Holy Spirit spoke by prophets many words which are not written down anywhere, but were vivid messages from God to those who heard them. If, again, a true prophet should appear anywhere, it would be because the Holy Spirit had a message to deliver through his lips to the Church or to the nations.

The special work of the Holy Spirit in the inspiration of Scripture will be considered in its proper place under the nineteenth Article.

III. THE DISPENSATION OF THE SPIRIT.

“That through our exalted Saviour He was sent forth in power.”—The event which marks the beginning of the Dispensation is the descent of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost at Jerusalem. This is as truly and really an era as the birth of the Son of God at Bethlehem. It was preceded and prepared for by promises, just as the coming of the Messiah was. The advent of the Son is in Scripture ascribed to the Father and the Holy Ghost (St. John vi. 57 ; St. Matt. i. 20 ; St. Luke i. 35). The advent of the Holy Ghost is ascribed to the Father and the Son (St. John xiv. 16, 26 ; xv. 26, 27 ; Acts ii. 33).

We have spoken of the mission and effusion of the Spirit as a definite historical fact, and a momentous era. It is a truth which needs to be emphasised. Surely they do not know it, who are heard praying for another and another Pentecost. There cannot be a repetition of what occurred on that memorable day—the birthday of the Church. Christ has gone up to heaven, and will come again : but the Holy Spirit has not gone away, and should not be addressed as though He had. If we say, “Come, Holy Spirit,

come!" we can only mean: manifest Thy presence, put forth Thy power, come nearer to our hearts with Thy sacred unction! It would be well to say just what we mean.

The idea of "power" is specially connected with the dispensation of the Spirit—power over mind and conscience, heart and will. It is indispensable to the success of the Gospel and the increase of the Church. Without it, instruction, advice, remonstrance, appeal, even the most painful experience, fails to overcome the resistance of human pride to the Gospel, the enmity of the fleshly mind to God. It is the Holy Spirit Who has power to make the conscience start and the heart melt, Who can wound and heal, warn and win, kill and make alive.

He was "sent forth in power," and abides as the Spirit of power; but the manifestation of His energy in the Church has been by no means uniform. In times and places, inconsistent Christians have grieved and quenched the Spirit, so that there has been a shading of the light and a hiding of the power. Then the feeling of loss and weakness ought to call the servants of Christ to prayer and to a more profound sense of dependence on God.

The office of the Holy Ghost, throughout this Dispensation, is to glorify Christ, and, as the Shorter Catechism says, to "apply to us the redemption purchased by Christ". This may be stated under two heads.

(1) *To convict and convert sinners.*—The language of the Article is: "*To convict the world of sin, to enlighten the minds of men in the knowledge of Christ, and to persuade and enable them to obey the call of the Gospel*". No creed or confession, except the Scottish of A.D. 1560, furnishes so full a statement of God's converting grace, as piercing the conscience, illuminating the understanding, and both quickening and energising the will.

We say nothing here of the means and agencies which the Holy Spirit employs. It has been already affirmed that He works freely at His will ; and this covers mediate as well as immediate operation. The meaning of our statement is that all effectual convictions and conversions are to be traced and ascribed to the power of the Holy Ghost as the ultimate spring and source of every decisive change for the better in the attitude and disposition of men toward God.

Conviction of sin may be by a slow or quick action of conscience, and may or may not be accompanied by horror or terror of soul. The essential matter is that a sinner should become sensible of the vileness of sin in himself, and be convinced that he is wrong and God is right, so that he unfeignedly desires to be delivered from his sin.

Then, by the Holy Spirit, the eyes of the mind and heart are opened to see in Jesus Christ the needed Deliverer. Most lucid teaching regarding the Saviour may be addressed to a whole congregation ; but only those whose eyes are divinely opened see the Lord. Perhaps Lydia was the only convert that St. Paul made, when he spoke to the women by the river-side at Philippi ; and it was not the apostle who enlightened her, but "the Lord opened her heart".

Yet more than conviction and enlightenment is needful to conversion. The root of unbelief is in the will quite as much as in the understanding ; and, therefore, in order to faith, the Holy Spirit must in every case "persuade and enable" men to turn to God and obey the call of His Gospel. The complaint of our Saviour was : "Ye will not come to Me, that ye may have life". Conversion means a willingness to come to Him ; and the change is brought about by the drawing and enabling grace of the Holy Spirit.

This convincing and converting work of the Spirit continues the same quite through the Dispensation. In every

country, every race, every rank, it is the same. Many things are modified by time and place, but not this. It is the same now as in the days of Christ and His apostles.

(2) *To abide with and in the saints.*—“*And that He abides with the Church, dwelling in every believer as the Spirit of truth, of holiness, and of comfort.*”

The Saviour left the world and went to the Father; yet before His ascension He promised to be with His disciples always. He was with them, nay, as St. Paul and St. John felt and said, He was in them, by the indwelling of His Spirit. The former of these apostles gives us in close sequence these three expressions as equivalent: “The Spirit of God dwelleth in you”; “Hath the Spirit of Christ”; “If Christ be in you” (Rom. viii. 9, 10). So Christ is still with His Church on earth by the abiding of the Holy Spirit, Who, alas! has been often resisted and grieved, but, through the tender mercy of God, has not been withdrawn or recalled to heaven.

It may be maintained that the Holy Spirit abides with the Church as a divine institution or society, giving life to her collective testimony and her sacred ordinances. But the Church really consists of the living Christians in successive generations, and the Spirit abides with the Church no otherwise than by dwelling in each and every believing heart. In some Christians it is very evident that they have received the Holy Ghost; in others it is hardly discernible by the most charitable eye. Yet in some measure it must be true of every Christian, for it is written: “If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His”. Therefore the Article affirms that He “dwells in every believer”: the Spirit of truth, to teach; of holiness, to sanctify; and of comfort, as shedding abroad in the heart the wondrous love of God.

The Orthodox Confession of the Eastern Church is remarkably full on this doctrine. It enumerates seven gifts or *charismata* of the Holy Spirit, resting mainly for authority on Isa. xi. 2, thus :—

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| 1. Wisdom | 5. Knowledge |
| 2. Understanding | 6. Purity (1 Tim. iv. 12) |
| 3. Counsel | 7. Fear of the Lord. |
| 4. Might | |

The fruits of the Spirit are given as nine from Gal. v. 22. It is more accurate to say nine properties of the one "fruit of the Spirit".

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|----------|------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Love | 4. Longsuffering | 7. Faithfulness |
| 2. Joy | 5. Kindness | 8. Meekness |
| 3. Peace | 6. Goodness | 9. Temperance
(self-control). |

Here are points enough by which to try ourselves whether we have received the Spirit Which is of God. "Ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you."



ARTICLE XII.

OF ELECTION AND REGENERATION.

We humbly own and believe that God the Father, before the foundation of the world, was pleased of His sovereign grace to choose unto Himself in Christ a people, whom He gave to the Son, and to whom the Holy Spirit imparts spiritual life by a secret and wonderful operation of His power, using as His ordinary means, where years of understanding have been reached, the truths of His Word in ways agreeable to the nature of man; so that, being born from above, they are the children of God, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.

HITHERTO the Articles have taken the widest range possible, treating of God and universal man, the providence over all, the Saviour of the world, the Gospel for every creature, and the Holy Spirit moving on the hearts of men in every age. But now we begin to describe the realisation and reception of the blessings of salvation, and lines of inclusion and exclusion necessarily come into view. There is a universal Gospel, but not a universal consent to the Gospel. There is a Christ for all, but all are not for Christ.

In the fifth Article, we confessed the condition of mankind

as condemned and estranged from God. We are now to consider how it is that any escape from that condition, and "*we humbly own and believe*" that it is by the sovereign grace of God. All through this Article we dwell on that grace, both in the purpose to save and in the execution of that purpose.

We have left the expression "the world," and now begin to deal with the fact that God has chosen and separated a people to Himself out of the world of men. As there is a law of natural selection in the creation surrounding us, so also there is a law of heavenly selection among ourselves. The very suggestion of this is resented by many minds as narrow and unfair. But we humbly own and believe it, because it is the account of the matter which is given in the Holy Oracles, and we cannot doubt that the Lord has reasons for this, which are good and sufficient.

Our Article does not go so far as the Westminster Confession and Catechisms in regard to the divine decrees, and the whole doctrine of predestination. There is no intention to recede from old positions, but it is deemed enough to affirm the election to salvation.

It is curious to see what a bugbear the doctrine of predestination is to many, and how it is stigmatised as a dismal notion peculiar to Calvinists. Yet even the Council of Trent did not call it in question. All that the twelfth chapter of its Canons does is to warn men against presumptuously assuming that they are in the number of the predestinate. Then, in the Churches which threw off the Roman obedience, Luther taught this tenet from Scripture as firmly as Zwingli and Calvin, and it is in all the Confessions. English Christians ought to know how fully it is stated in the seventeenth of the Thirty-nine Articles.

But, apart from venerable authorities, why should that

forecasting action of the divine mind, which is called predestination, be so very mysterious and perplexing? To us it would seem far more difficult to conceive of a Supreme Being Who did not fore-ordain as well as foresee. How can you think of God ruling over all, yet remaining uncertain as to events, and waiting to form His decisions after His creatures have made theirs—and so obtaining His objects only in so far as the creatures may choose and determine?

The unwillingness to receive this doctrine seems to spring from confounding it with fate. Under this impression it is supposed to depress the mind and discourage moral energy. But the two are quite different. The objection is well taken to a doctrine of fate, that it assumes every future event to be absolutely and separately decreed, so that it must come to pass, apart from any direction of steps or means thereto. But the doctrine of predestination contemplates each event as the result of a process, or the term in a series, every prior term in which must be made good, else the event in question cannot be made good. In the former case, activity, on the part of beings interested in the event, is paralysed; in the latter case, it is required and encouraged. The doctrine of divine fore-ordination is simply that of an all-surveying, all-controlling, all-wise divine will; and this is no hindrance to human exertion, but a great incentive to it, because it is a guarantee that exertion in directions pleasing to God will have success, and that, if not in every turn of affairs, yet, in the grand issue, justice and mercy must prevail.

The Article confines itself to the specific predestination of a people to salvation in Christ. But it is not to salvation, do what they may; it is to salvation in a way which is right and holy, and the divine purpose contemplates and secures the means as well as the end, the steps as well as the terminus.

“*Before the foundation of the world.*”—The eternity of the divine election is thus expressed in a phrase quoted from St. Paul (Eph. i. 4), and already cited in many of the Confessions of Faith; *e.g.*, the Scottish, the Thirty-nine Articles, and the Westminster.

“*God the Father was pleased of His sovereign grace to choose unto Himself in Christ a people.*”—Observe the plural and collective word—“a people”. In Holy Writ the divine choice of an individual is to specific office, dignity, or work. Election unto salvation is predicated of a community or people—resolvable, no doubt, into so many individuals—but in the sovereign choice, contemplated together. So, of old time, Jehovah chose Israel to be a people near to Him—elect and beloved. There is no other explanation to be given of Israel’s unique position in the religious annals of the world, save the divine election. But now we learn that in Jesus Christ, God has enlarged His choice, elected and selected “a people unto Himself” out of all nations and kindreds of the earth. Such is the Church of God. As Israel was the people of God chosen and called (Isa. xlv. 4), so, under the Gospel, the people of God as divinely chosen form the elect, and as divinely called form the Church. The apostles said nothing of an election within the Church. The Church was the election. So the members of the Colossian Church are addressed by St. Paul as “elect of God,” the Thessalonians are assured of their “election,” and in the Book of Revelation, they who are with the Lamb are “called and chosen and faithful”. They are called in their several successive generations by the Spirit and the Word; they were chosen before the foundation of the world. See this laid down with luminous force of language in Eph. i. 3-6.

The first result of the divine choice is the divine gift of

this people to the Son of God: "*Whom He gave to the Son,*" and the next that they are made alive to God in Christ by the quickening power of the Holy Spirit. Such seems to be the order of "sovereign grace". The conscious action of the individuals who compose the people of Christ begins with repentance and the belief of the Gospel; and they so act, not on an assumption of their own election, for which they have no ground, but on the revelation of God's great love to mankind, which is abundantly revealed. They repent, not because they suppose themselves elect, but because they know and feel themselves to be sinners. And they believe, not because they suppose themselves elect, but because God has given the record concerning His Son, and called and commanded them and all men to believe and live.

Now mark how God carries out His purpose of grace.

"To whom the Holy Spirit imparts spiritual life by a secret and wonderful operation of His power."—This is regeneration, which means more than conversion. The latter term denotes that the soul is turned to God; the former that it is made alive unto God by being born of the Spirit. The phrase "secret and wonderful operation of His power" has been suggested by the language of the Council of Dort (A.D. 1619), which describes regeneration as "evidently a supernatural operation most powerful and at the same time most sweet, wonderful, secret, and ineffable. All those in whose hearts God works in this marvellous manner are certainly, infallibly, and effectually regenerated, and do actually believe."

Such regeneration may be in infancy. There can be no conversion of an infant; but before a child reaches an age when it is possible for him to turn away from God, he may be begotten from above, and grow up a child of heavenly

grace. He will need improvement, confirmation, correction, and guidance, but it is quite possible that he may never need conversion.

Infant regeneration, however, is not the same thing as infant baptismal regeneration. Baptism is a sign of regeneration, whether of infants or of adults. In its highest use, it is a seal of regeneration. But there is no authority for saying that baptism with water confers regeneration; and to assign the inward grace of God to the outward act of man, and make the one depend on the other, is to reverse the proper order of the sign and the thing signified, and to throw into our religion an element of materialistic superstition.

We are not competent to explain how the Divine Spirit may enter into and operate upon the undeveloped moral nature of a babe: but we have something further to say in the case of those who have reached "years of understanding".

"Using as His ordinary means, when years of understanding have been reached, the truths of His Word in ways agreeable to the nature of man."—The operation is not magical. The Holy Spirit is not restricted to the use of means, but is wont to employ them. Moreover, He uses them in ways agreeable to, *i.e.*, consonant with, the nature of man; which nature is not invaded and forced, but enlightened and persuaded, with its responsibility kept intact. Various are those means—more various than we can know or tell: for who is able to trace out all the dealings of God with man? But it is quite safe to say that the "ordinary means" in regeneration are "the truths of His Word". The Westminster divines said: "The ministry of the Word". The Heidelberg Catechism: "The preaching of the Holy Gospel". The Second Helvetic Confession

also has : "The preaching of the Gospel". But it is not desirable to put such exclusive honour on the proclamation of the Word, as though the Spirit did not employ private reading of the Bible or the suggestion of sacred truth in correspondence or conversation. Better to say that truths of the Divine Word, however brought before the mind, do, in the power of the Spirit, enlighten the eyes and bring new life into the soul. St. Peter describes the Christian as "begotten again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, through the Word of God, which liveth and abideth".

It is by the manifestation of that spiritual life which is imparted to them that the elect people of Christ may be recognised. God does not choose them after their regeneration, or because of it. He has chosen them to regeneration, repentance, faith, and holiness.

"So that, being born from above, they are the children of God."—The clause "being born from above" is introduced to make it quite plain to every reader that the imparting of spiritual life, above-mentioned, is just that birth anew, or birth from above, of which our Lord spoke to Nicodemus, and which is so often referred to by His apostles, especially by St. John. It was the more necessary to be explicit on this point, because it has often been regretted that the Westminster divines do not ever in the Shorter Catechism make mention of the "new birth" or "regeneration"; and not every one is able to recognise it under the technical phrase taken from Latin books of theology, "effectual calling".

As they who are born of human parents are rightly styled children of men, so the regenerate, being born of God, are "the children of God". Behold ! what manner of love ! This honour is not given to angels, who are

servants of God and of the heirs of salvation. Men redeemed and regenerate are the children, and if children, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ. St. Paul uses the title "children of God," as we do here, to express the disposition of the regenerate; and the title "sons of God" to denote their position of privilege, the result of their adoption, as we also do in the fourteenth Article. St. John, who does not touch on position and privilege in the household, but, in his Gospel and Epistles, always thinks of the subjective effect of regeneration, uses the phrase "children of God"—never "sons". In his First Epistle, after declaring that every doer of righteousness has been begotten of God, he writes: "Beloved, now are we children of God" (1 John iii. 1, 2, Rev. Vers.). On this the apostle founds all his exhortations to admire the love of God, to do righteousness, and to love the brethren.

"Created in Christ Jesus unto good works."—The great spiritual change of which we speak is described in the New Testament, not only as a birth, but also as a new creation—producing out of confusion a new order, out of darkness a new light—not changing the substance of the soul, but completely changing its convictions, desires, habits, and principles. The words with which our Article ends are cited from St. Paul; and stronger language cannot be found to indicate the thoroughness of the Spirit's regenerating work—work which nothing short of a divine energy can effect. "If any man be in Christ, there is a new creation." It is a blessing in detail, bestowed on every man apart. In him God creates a clean heart—gives life, and light, and fruitfulness; and then stamps His own image on the new man. Lo! it is "all very good".

All this doctrine is wholesome. Election leads to regeneration; and regeneration issues in "good works".



ARTICLE XIII.

OF JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH.

We believe that every one, who through the grace of the Holy Spirit repents and believes the Gospel, confessing and forsaking his sins, and humbly relying upon Christ alone for salvation, is freely pardoned and accepted as righteous in the sight of God, solely on the ground of Christ's perfect obedience and atoning sacrifice.

HERE we enter on a doctrine which has been keenly disputed. We must part company with both the Greek and the Latin Churches, and follow the Lutheran and the Reformed. Not that they have dominion over our faith, but that they seem to us more accurately to apprehend the teaching of the New Testament on this theme.

It must be confessed that a great deal of the controversy on this subject in the sixteenth century savours of logomachy. The disputants had never agreed on a definition of the term "justification," and using the word in different senses, could never agree about it. The Latins never dissociated justification from sanctification. Indeed the Council of Trent explicitly confounded them in these words: "Justification

is not remission of sins only, but also the sanctification and renewal of the inner man" (chap. vii.). It followed, as a matter of course, that Roman Catholic theologians could not leave out of their view of justification the progress of piety, the infusion of habitual righteousness, and the production of good works. On the other hand, Protestant divines treated of justification strictly as the reverse of condemnation; therefore an act of God with regard to man, not a work of God in man. Consequently they could not admit as grounds of such a divine act, the good, but defectively good, works of men; they could recognise no merit as sufficient but the merit of Jesus Christ. Then the Romanists most unfairly accused them of indifference to good works; whereas they only excluded such works from the place where they could not avail for righteousness, in order to put them in the place where they do avail for gracious reward. Of this controversy no adjustment is possible until the parties to it agree on the sense in which the term "justification" is to be used, so that they may speak of the same thing. Indeed, if this were done, there would probably be no controversy left.

In the body of the Article the technical term does not occur, but the blessing which the term in the title properly covers is set forth according to Holy Scripture. There is no confusion of justification with sanctification. The proposition is that a man whom God justifies "*is freely pardoned and accepted as righteous in the sight of God*". True, he is also renewed and purified. That is stated in other Articles, but not here, because such a statement in this place might lead to confusion, certainly could not contribute to clearness, of thought.

It is a singular fact that the Scotch and the First Helvetic Confessions have no definite doctrine of justification: but

the Lutheran Confession of Augsburg and the Reformed Confessions generally—the French, the Belgic, the Second Helvetic, and the Thirty-nine Articles, followed by the Westminster Confession and Catechisms, have clear and firm statements on the subject; and with all these our Article accords.

We must find our starting-point in the fact that men are sinners under condemnation. Such is the position of the race in the eye of divine justice; and every man, by every sin which he commits, incurs more and more condemnation. If there be any way in which man may be extricated from guilt and doom, it must be by divine appointment. If, under an orderly human administration, a condemned culprit is pardoned and restored to civil rights and liberties, it will be done not according to his will or plan, but according to the good-will and behest of public authority. So, under the divine administration, it is useless to interrogate the wisdom of men, themselves transgressors, as to the way or ground of justification. It is a matter to be decided by God only; and all we have to do is to study the Book in which He has revealed His will.

“We believe that every one who, through the grace of the Holy Spirit, repents and believes the Gospel.”—Beginning thus, we do not presume to say that God never pardons or accepts any of the human race but those who believe the Gospel. It is not for us to hazard an opinion as to His dealing with persons who have had no opportunity to hear the Word of His grace. We cannot tell how far Christ's “blood and righteousness” may avail for the salvation of men who could not believe on Him simply because they never got apostolic testimony or divine record concerning Him. But we state the way in which, and the grounds on which, justification is conferred on sinful men like ourselves,

living under the dispensation of the Gospel. He who would be justified by God must censure himself. Enlightened and convicted by the Holy Spirit, he must repent and believe the Gospel as God's message of grace to sinners. That there may be no mistake, clauses are added to explain and emphasise the repentance and the faith.

"Confessing and forsaking his sins."—The candidate for justification, if we may use such an expression, is not to stand on his own merit or look for acceptance on account of his personal virtue. He is to own his unworthiness, and with grief and shame confess his sins. It is the self-condemning man whom God will justify; the self-justifying man God will condemn. But confession is not all. He must forsake his sins—at least in heart-purpose. Let no one think to be covered with an imputed righteousness, if he still regards iniquity in his heart.

"And humbly relying on Christ alone for salvation."—This clause is intended to show that the candidate for justification must not merely believe that the Gospel is true and Christ is mighty to save, but must trust in Christ for his own salvation, must rely humbly but firmly on Him "alone"—not attempting to add anything whatever to the one ample and glorious security. Our ground of confidence and peace is not Christ and our prayers, or Christ and our works, or Christ and the sacraments, or Christ and the Church, but "Christ alone".

Let a man—any man—thus repent and believe, and the great redeeming work of Christ, meritorious and accepted in heaven, becomes available and effectual for him. God's love to him has been from eternity, but not God's justification. This last is an act of God, complete, not gradual or progressive, which comes into existence when the sinner repents and believes, and not till then. But from that hour it is sure

and steadfast. "It is God that justifieth: who is he that condemneth?"

"*Is freely pardoned and accepted as righteous in the sight of God.*"—It is quite clear that justification is not the change which is wrought on the dispositions and desires of the man who repents and believes, though there must be such a change. It is a complete alteration of his state, or *status*, before God, and of the light in which he is regarded by God. He is "freely pardoned," so that none of his transgressions which he committed will be mentioned against him any more. He is also "accepted as righteous," for pardon alone is not a complete reversal of a sentence of condemnation. A criminal may be forgiven and released, yet regarded with suspicion and kept at a distance. Blessed be God! He not only forgives the transgressors, but takes back the banished ones into His presence.

Strong exception is often taken to the very idea that God accepts men as righteous who are not really so. This is stigmatised as a dogmatic fiction and a "make-believe," such as ought not to be attributed to the God of truth. Let us see if there is any substance in this as an allegation against our doctrine. There is nothing strange or in the least unreal in the idea of being pardoned for the sake, or through the intervention, of another, or even being accepted or taken into favour on the ground of some claim established by another—when that other is not an unconnected stranger, but is in some way closely, yet innocently, identified with the offender. Now, Jesus Christ is not in this question as a stranger. He intervenes as the appointed Representative of the sinner, the Surety for the debtor who cannot pay. It is no fiction, but an intelligible and reasonable result, that in and through Him Who fulfilled all righteousness, the offender, now united to Christ

by faith, should go free, and even find acceptance. Nor is there anything in this which is hollow, or unworthy of the God of purity and truth. He justifies the ungodly; but does not let him continue in ungodliness. He Who justifies also sanctifies. He Who imputes also implants righteousness. In fact, the answer to nearly all the difficulties that are suggested on this head of doctrine lies in the simple fact that justification and sanctification, while conceived of separately, are in personal religion inseparably united.

“*Solely on the ground of Christ's perfect obedience and atoning sacrifice.*”—The ground on which God's justifying act proceeds is given in some of the Confessions both negatively and positively: in our Article positively only. The Second Helvetic (chap. xv.) defines the term “to justify” thus: “To remit sins, to absolve from guilt and punishment, to receive into favour, and to pronounce just”. And further: “God alone justifies us, for Christ's sake (*propter Christum*), not imputing to us our sins, but imputing to us His righteousness”. The eleventh of the Thirty-nine Articles declares: “We are accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, by faith, and not for our own works or deservings”. The Westminster Confession makes the disclaimer more full and explicit: “Not for anything wrought in them, or done by them, but for Christ's sake alone, not by imputing faith itself, the act of believing, or any other evangelical obedience to them as their righteousness”. Such disclaimers have their value against unsound doctrine, but we are content to give the grounds positively; *viz.*, the obedience and the sacrifice of Christ. The former compensates for our disobedience; the latter atones for our sins. To these twain, which merge in one, God has respect in justifying those who repent and believe, and therefore they

are called "the ground" of our justification. The great divine act, perfect and complete, demands a ground perfect and complete; and this is found. The obedience was without flaw, and the atonement without defect. We cannot think of God as doing any judicial act on grounds uncertain or partial, and such are the best pleas that man can put forward on his own behalf. Only the work of Christ is finished, consummate, and secure.

It is in the Epistles to the Romans and to the Galatians that this doctrine is most fully taught in opposition to the vain confidence of self-righteousness under the law. In the fourth chapter to the Romans St. Paul affirms that justification by faith was celebrated in the Psalms of David, and that still farther back this blessing was conferred on Abraham. If we believe in God, Who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, we are blessed with faithful Abraham, who "believed God, and it was counted to him unto righteousness," and with the man described by the Psalmist, "unto whom God reckoneth righteousness apart from works". God is righteous in so justifying us; and we, being accepted as righteous through faith, have peace with God, and, standing in His grace, rejoice in the hope of His glory. In his letter to the Galatians, the same apostle insists on the condemning power of the law, and the futility of all attempts to reach justification thereby. They who are "of the works of the law" are under the curse.

Many persons altogether undervalue such discussions as this Article covers. Interest in such questions has faded away. The modern tendency is to eliminate the judicial aspect or element from Christian theology, and recognise only therapeutic grace. Man is not seriously thought of as a transgressor who incurs condemnation. He is merely a soul-sick and heart-weary creature needing to be healed.

But surely that is the right theology which looks in the face all the facts of man's sinful state, and all the aspects of the salvation which he needs, not according to the thought-fashions of this age or that, but according to the Bible, corroborated by the testimonies of roused and exercised consciences. Indeed, there cannot be any real healing of the inward plague and sickness of our moral nature until there is peace of conscience ; and peace must rest, not on our own faith or our own improvement, but on Christ our righteousness. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."



ARTICLE XIV.

OF SONSHIP IN CHRIST.

We believe that those who receive Christ by faith are united to Him, so that they are partakers in His life, and receive of His fulness ; and that they are adopted into the family of God, are made heirs with Christ, and have His Spirit abiding in them, the witness to their sonship, and the earnest of their inheritance.

THE doctrine of Sonship fitly follows that of acceptance. The sequence calls to mind the promise : “ I will receive you, and will be to you a Father, and ye shall be to Me sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty ”. But the Article before us is more comprehensive than its title. It treats (1) of Union to Christ : (2) of Sonship in Christ. And in both parts it sets forth aspects and benefits of grace—abounding grace.

I. UNION TO CHRIST.

Union means junction in one ; and union is the condition which ensues.

“ We believe that those who receive Christ by faith are

united to Him.”—The expression “receive Christ by faith” has been employed already in the tenth Article, and needs no exposition here. Christ is not only revealed, but freely offered in the Gospel; and those who embrace the Gospel in faith receive Him as their Lord and Saviour, their righteousness and strength. Then by the link of faith they are joined to the Lord. The relation established between Him and them is so close as to be a union. They are in Him for righteousness and acceptance with God. He is in them for life, health, and holiness. In brief, this union is the indispensable foundation of both justification and sanctification. When a man is in Christ, he is justified. When Christ is in the man, he is sanctified.

“*So that they are partakers in His life*”; *i.e.*, in the life to which He was raised from the dead. The relation established is more than a junction of aims and interests, or even a reciprocity of affection. We are “quickened together with Christ”. A profound mystery of grace is the kindling and nourishing of ten thousands of lives from one; and the enfolding of all those lives in the rich and princely vitality of Jesus Christ! He is the true Vine, and His disciples in all times, and all lands, are the branches. O marvellous Vine, the Christ of God, that pours fresh life into new shoots and branches that no man can number!

“*And receive of His fulness.*”—The phrase is taken from Holy Writ. St. Paul first used it in Col. i. 19; ii. 9, 10. Against all the Phrygian speculations about a *pleroma* or plenitude of being, he claimed the true divine plenitude for the Lord Jesus, and taught Christians to repair always to Him. Then St. John put down the same truth in the sublime proëm to his Gospel, chap. i. 14, 16. In Jesus Christ there is a richness of nature, a depth of wisdom, a largeness of spirit, an inexhaustible store of moral and

spiritual resource quite unapproached by the most gifted sons of men. He was, and is, "full of grace and truth": grace, to meet our unworthiness and inadequacy; truth, which relieves our perplexity and doubt. To this fulness, all who are united to Him have continual access. Out of this fulness they are replenished. The more that they contemplate Christ, the more are they satisfied in Him. The more they learn of Him, the more do they find rest to their souls. The more they eat of "this Bread," the stronger they grow. The more they ask of Him, the more of living water they obtain—water that "springs up unto eternal life".

So far of the union with Christ, which makes His merit our defence, His peace our peace, His friends our friends, His enemies our enemies, His cause our cause, His mind our mind, His very life our life. Because He lives, we live also.

II. SONSHIP IN CHRIST.

The form of the expression sufficiently intimates that we do not here speak of a filial relation borne by all mankind to a universal Father. Such universal Fatherhood is not a distinctive tenet of Christianity. It was known to the ancients. St. Paul recognises it only in a quotation from a heathen poet: "We are His offspring". What this Article treats of is something far more intimate and definite. It is the Fatherhood of God in relation to those who are vitally united to Christ. The Jews, who rejected our Lord, said confidently that God was their Father; but Christ rejected this claim. If God were their Father, they would love, and not hate, His only-begotten Son. So also now it is in vain that Christ-rejecting men prate confidently about the Fatherhood of God. Our Lord gave the right to become children of God to those who received Him and be-

lieved on His name. In this sense, at all events, sonship cannot be universal, unless faith and justification by faith are universal also.

“*And that they are adopted into the family of God.*”—This language is derived from the Epistles to the Galatians and the Romans. It occurs in a comparison between the *status* of the faithful under the Law, and that which is accorded to them under the Gospel. In the times of the Law, even godly men were servants under some measure of bondage. In the days of the Gospel, believers in all nations are made sons and daughters, as by a solemn act of adoption. Such an act among ancient nations was a very grave and decisive step, not to be recalled or reversed, giving to the adopted one the full rights and privileges of a son born in the house. So decisive is this act of God: and it is vital to our peace and our comfort in Christ to know that we are admitted into His redeemed family, not as by a mere consent through silence, or on conditional terms and in tentative fashion, but by a decisive act of divine grace.

The chief joy which this brings to the heart is that of being able to call God our Father, referring and committing everything to Him, and through every mist, and above every cloud, beholding our Father's face. The promises cannot fail; for our Father cannot lie. Affliction cannot crush: it is our Father's rod. The ship on which we have embarked cannot founder: our Father is at the helm.

We proceed to mention two eminent privileges of the family of God.

1. *Heirship*.—“*Are made heirs with Christ.*”—“If children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ” (Rom. viii. 17).

Christ, the first born from the dead, has been “appointed Heir of all things”. Then as many as are united to Him

through faith are admitted to share His great inheritance. What magnificence of grace! "An inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away." The dignity of co-heirship with Christ is higher than the place of angels, for they are not heirs, but servants to the heirs of salvation. They worship the Son of God, but are not united with Him as are the redeemed from among men, nor have they place or interest in the covenant of promise. They that are Christ's are "Abraham's seed, and heirs according to promise".

2. *The abiding of the Holy Spirit.*—"And have His Spirit abiding in them."—The Spirit that led the Saviour Himself, in the time of His earthly service, is given to all the sons of God, as Christ's Spirit, to lead them in the way of His steps. It is the way of wisdom, and He is the Spirit of wisdom. It is the way of meekness, and He is the Spirit of meekness. It is the way of holiness, and He is the Spirit of holiness. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God."

We have now reached important points of internal or experimental religion. Already, in the eleventh Article, we have affirmed the indwelling of the Holy Ghost. In the sixteenth Article we shall describe His work of sanctification. In the present Article we refer to His inward confirmation and consolation of believers, and express this in two clauses.

(1) "*The witness to their sonship.*"—See Rom. viii. 16. The divine Sonship of our Lord Himself was attested in the days of His flesh by the Holy Spirit. When He "went up from the water" of the Jordan, the Spirit descended on Him as a dove, while a voice out of the heavens proclaimed Him God's "Beloved Son". Again, when He had risen from the sepulchre, "He was declared to be the Son of God

with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead". And between these two events, throughout His career, the Holy Spirit, resting on Him, bore witness with His spirit to the supporting and comforting fact that God was His own Father, and that in Him the Father was well pleased.

They who are made sons of God in and with the Lord Jesus Christ have the Spirit of the Son resting on them, and assuring their hearts of the Father's love. The witness which their own spirits yield consists in their filial reverence for God, love of His word and ways, and fraternal regard for all who bear the image and likeness of Jesus Christ. Then the Holy Spirit, indwelling, confirms and augments this testimony, by the change of disposition which He effects within, by the fruit which He produces in character and conduct, and by such more direct impression on the individual consciousness as may hardly be put into words, but has, for those who receive it, the force and value of a strong assurance.

What we have described is what may be and ought to be, rather than what is commonly realised. Probably it goes beyond the experience of many persons whose Christianity we have no wish to question; but it does not go beyond the teaching of the New Testament. We must not pull down the doctrine to meet defective piety, but seek to have the piety lifted up to meet the doctrine.

(2) "*And the earnest of their inheritance.*"—See Eph. i. 14. The abiding of the Holy Spirit is not only a seal of the grace which has been given to us, but also a pledge of the glory which is promised to us. When Israel marched through the wilderness, the presence of Jehovah in the midst of the camp, denoted by the Ark of the Covenant and the pillar of fire and cloud above it, was at once a seal or

certification of the redemption of the tribes, and a divine pledge that they would inherit the promised land. So also now, the presence of the Holy Spirit with the Church and in the hearts of believers is not only a confirmation of their being the Lord's redeemed, but also an earnest of their promised inheritance in the age to come.

Here surely is a check on vain hope. Let every man examine himself. If he has not received the earnest, how can he expect the possession? A corrective also of sensational ideas of the inheritance of saints, as of scenes of splendour, "and raptures through and through". As the earnest is, so will the inheritance be. The former is the sanctifying presence of the Holy Spirit in us: thus the latter will be a blessedness of dispositions, fellowships, and employments that are absolutely holy and undefiled. "The mind of the Spirit," in the present time, "is life and peace": and, therefore, it is the foretaste and pledge of an inheritance of eternal life and perfect peace, when the Lord Jesus shalt come and take His co-heirs with Him into their promised possession; and there shall be "the manifestation of the glory of the sons of God".

Finally, mark how the two parts of this Article hang together. It is union to Christ that brings us into the sonship, and brings the pledge of that sonship into us. Union with Christ, in the power and comfort of the Spirit, carries with it and sustains the whole life of experimental religion. We are thus:—

- | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| (a) Crucified with Him. | (e) Seated with Him. |
| (b) Buried with Him. | (f) Sufferers with Him. |
| (c) Quickened with Him. | (g) Glorified with Him. |
| (d) Raised up with Him. | |



ARTICLE XV.

OF THE LAW AND NEW OBEDIENCE.

We believe and acknowledge that the Lord Jesus Christ has laid His people by His grace under new obligation to keep the perfect Law of God, and has by precept and example enlarged our knowledge of that Law, and illustrated the spirit of filial love in which the divine will is to be obeyed; and we bless God that the obedience of Christians, though in this life always imperfect, yet being the fruit of their union to Christ, is accepted for His sake and well-pleasing to God.

MORAL conduct is the duty of all beings who possess a moral nature; and from whatever quarter sound moral laws and precepts come, they ought to be obeyed. This is true all the world over, and apart from the Christian revelation. But our Article, declaring the Church's belief, refers to the moral attitude and obligation of Christ's redeemed people. The three preceding Articles have dealt exclusively with them, exhibiting the grace of God in their election, regeneration, justification, and adoption. It is time to say that He Who has shown to them such favour has laid special and sacred obligation upon them. Nay, there is need to

lay emphasis on this. Many who profess and call themselves Christians are fond of religion so long as it means getting and enjoying. They talk readily of the sense of pardon, the comfort of hope, and the joy of salvation ; but on Christian duty and unobtrusive, self-denying service their minds do not dwell. We must explain and insist upon the obligation of obedience to the Lord's will—cheerful, childlike, and implicit obedience. After the call to repentance, and the promise of forgiveness and cleansing in the first chapter of Isaiah, this sentence follows : “ If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land ”.

The will of God, however and wherever recorded, is to us a law of constant and unlimited obligation. For the grounds of this obligation we cannot do better than quote the Westminster Confession : “ The moral law doth for ever bind all, as well justified persons as others, to the obedience thereof ; and that not only in regard of the matter contained in it, but also in respect of the authority of God the Creator Who gave it ”. We do not specify the part or parts of Scripture in which this law is found. The books of the Pentateuch were of old denominated the Law, as distinguished from the Psalms and the Prophets. The moral law was epitomised for the people of Israel in the Ten Words of Sinai. To us there is a law in all the moral precepts and injunctions which are delivered in any part of Scripture as from God. We are not to take as our rule the moral actions even of godly men, for they may have come short in duty, or may have mistaken the divine will. But there is a law for us in all that God has enjoined by His holy prophets, and more especially in the commandments of His Son Jesus Christ, Who in this respect was “ a prophet like unto Moses,” that He gave laws to a redeemed people, binding them on conscience as by immediate divine authority.

It is necessary, of course, to distinguish between keeping the law as a ground of self-righteousness, and rendering obedience to it as a rule of life. In the former sense the law condemns, and cannot save ; but in the latter it is to be pondered and willingly observed by all whom grace has saved. They ought to delight in it with the blessed man of the first Psalm. They ought to value and keep the precepts, statutes, commandments, and judgments of Jehovah, as set forth in Psalms xix. and cxix. St. James requires Christians not merely to hear the Word, but to do it, and describes it as "the perfect law, the law of liberty".

The phrase "perfect law" is transferred to our Article ; and Christian liberty is shown to be no unregulated licence. Far from loosening the bands of moral obligation, the Gospel adds emphasis to the whole subject of duty. Indeed the New Testament, in proportion to its size, uses the words "command" and "commandment" as often as the Old.

The Article has two topics :—

I. THE RELATION OF CHRISTIANS TO THE PERFECT LAW.

1. The obligation to obedience.—"*We believe and acknowledge that the Lord Jesus Christ has laid His people by His grace under new obligation to keep the perfect Law of God.*"—The law is regarded as a *regula* or canon which gives definiteness to moral duty. And now as to the obligation of Christians to give heed to it, we may continue our recent quotation from the Westminster Chapter on the Law : "Neither doth Christ in the Gospel any way dissolve, but much strengthen, this obligation". The Israelites were bound to observe the Ten Commandments and other divine statutes given through Moses, not merely because they were creatures of God amenable to the Creator, but also and

chiefly because they were a redeemed nation, and should be subject to their Divine Redeemer. Of this they were reminded in what is sometimes called "The Preface to the Ten Commandments": "I am Jehovah thy God Who brought thee," etc. (Exod. xx. 2). In Christ we have a far greater redemption, and are placed thereby under enhanced obligation to keep the commands and honour all the revealed will of God our Saviour. What manner of persons ought a ransomed people to be in all holy living and godliness!

2. The range of obedience.—"*And has by precept and example enlarged our knowledge of that Law.*"—It may be represented that our Lord Jesus reduced the extent of the statutory law in Israel, inasmuch as He laid stress on moral precepts only, and introduced a dispensation which does not concern itself with the ceremonial laws of the Old Testament. But our statement applies to moral duty only; and it must be plain to every reader of the New Testament that Jesus Christ enlarged and illuminated ethical obligation. He laid stress not so much on negations and prohibitions, so frequent in the Decalogue, as on positive requirements to love God and man, and to do well. He exposed the futility of a merely formal and external observance, laid emphasis on "the weightier matters of the law," and taught His disciples to enter into the inner meaning and spirit of divine commandments. In the Sermon on the Mount, He showed how commands that refer to actions reach to one's looks, thoughts, and unuttered desires. And then He added to the old law invaluable precepts as from Himself, especially on the duties of patience, self-denial, brotherly kindness, and the forgiveness of injuries.

The effect of this ethical teaching is very marked in the Apostle Paul. He was at first a disciple of the Pharisees, and gloried in the Law as they interpreted and used it to

establish self-righteousness. When, however, he came into the school of Jesus Christ, Paul ceased from this legalism, but took up the Law for another purpose, as a rule of life under Christ, and gained a remarkable knowledge of the application of the Commandments to the details of disposition and conduct. See in the fourth, fifth, and sixth chapters to the Ephesians how he uses the fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, and ninth precepts of the Decalogue in enforcing duty between man and man, and especially between Christian and Christian.

3. The spirit of obedience.—“*And illustrated the spirit of filial love in which the divine will is to be obeyed.*” — So also says the Westminster Confession : “The Spirit of Christ subduing and enabling the will of man to do that, freely and cheerfully, which the will of God, revealed in the Law, requireth to be done”. God looks upon the heart, and takes account, not merely of acts of obedience, but of the disposition with which they are performed. Now, under the Old Testament some were brought to a genuine love for Jehovah and His law ; but their obedience was in the spirit of servants rather than that of sons. Under the grace of the New Testament “the adoption of sons” is freely given, and with it the spirit of sonship ; and, therefore, the obedience ought to be filial. Our pattern is the Son Who pleased the Father in all things, being willingly, patiently, and constantly obedient. As sons, we are to go and work in our Father’s vineyard ; not rendering the service of a hireling who wants short hours and long pay, but as dutiful sons, eager to do our Father’s will.

II. THE DIVINE ACCEPTANCE OF CHRISTIAN OBEDIENCE.

“*Though in this life always imperfect.*”—Not the best man on the earth keeps the commandments of God without

fault or failure. We, therefore, utterly reject the Roman doctrine of works of supererogation. The saints on the earth do not attain to a perfect obedience; far less can they go beyond it and lay up a surplus or excess of merit, out of which, or in consideration of which, blessings may accrue to themselves or others. Against this the Reformed Churches indignantly protested. The fourteenth of the Thirty-nine Articles says that "works of supererogation cannot be taught without arrogance and impiety". The Westminster Confession is very explicit: "They who in their obedience attain to the greatest height which is possible in this life, are so far from being able to supererogate, and to do more than God requires, that they fall short of much which in duty they are bound to do".

"We bless God that the obedience of Christians, though in this life always imperfect, yet being the fruit of their union to Christ, is accepted for His sake and well-pleasing to God."
—The imperfection of the obedience excludes all notion of justification by the deeds of the law. As a signal and decisive act of God, justification must proceed on a ground that is complete and without flaw. No man's obedience in this life is complete and without flaw; therefore no man is justified on the merit of his personal obedience—or on any merit derived from saints, for they have none to spare. But it by no means follows that God takes no account of the obedience rendered to Him by those whom He has freely pardoned and received in Christ. He does take account of it. What could not be accepted as a ground of justification is graciously accepted, and even rewarded, as a willing obedience and loving service. And all in Christ Jesus. The obedience is rendered in Christ, and is indeed the "fruit of union" to Him—the filling up of His obedience in His body the Church, a prolonga-

tion of His filial service. And then it "is accepted for His sake".

The phrase "well-pleasing to God" is meant to cover more than the word "accepted". It brings in the thought of gracious reward. Here, again, we quote the Westminster Confession: "God, looking upon believers in His Son, is pleased to accept and reward that which is sincere, although accompanied with many weaknesses and imperfections". It may be enough to remind the reader of our Lord's parables of the rewards that await good and faithful servants.

Here is encouragement for true-hearted Christians. So long as we hear only of the lofty rectitude of God, the perfect law, and the impossibility of reaching a position of justification through our obedience to that law, we admit that it must be so, but are conscious of a crushing and discouraging influence on our minds. Here is the balancing and encouraging element that we want. It is possible for a man in this life to please God. Though His children be faulty, yet, if they be loving and obedient, the great Father accepts and rewards their service through Jesus Christ Whose work is perfect. Not an act of self-denial, not a word of faithful witness, not a deed of kindness ever so small escapes His notice, or will lack its recompense. It does not require some conspicuous service or munificent gift to catch His eye. No matter how lowly the position of the well-doer, or how small the offering of the cheerful giver—if the spirit of filial love be there—the doer and the deed, the giver and the gift, have recognition and approval on high.

It may appear as though this Article did not maintain so elevated a level of thought as those which have gone before. But it is none the less profitable, and none the less essential to a complete conception both of the divine salvation and

of the Christian calling. Indeed the doctrine of new obedience is one to be pressed on this generation. The age is restless, and impatient of control; and the spirit of the age creeps into the Church. We are not to yield to this, or humour it; but to recollect that our Lord Jesus "pleased not Himself". His humanity was perfected in a consistent and loving obedience to the righteous Father. So Christians are "chosen to obedience," as well as to "sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. i. 2). And Christian manhood or womanhood is at its best, when least self-assertive, when most obedient to the righteous Lord.

Disobedience spoils everything. It nullifies ever so confident a profession of religion. He is no child of God who has not respect to His commandments.



ARTICLE XVI.

OF SANCTIFICATION AND PERSEVERANCE.

We believe that the Holy Spirit dwelling in all Christ's people purifies their hearts, enabling them to do freely and cheerfully that which the will of God requires, so that in measure as they surrender themselves to the Spirit of Christ, and follow the guidance of His Word, they receive strength for daily service, and grow in holiness after the image of their Lord ; or if, departing from God through unwatchfulness and neglect of prayer, any of them lapse into spiritual languor, or fall into grievous sins, yet by the mercy of God Who abideth faithful they are not cast off, but are chastened for their backsliding, and through repentance restored to His favour, so that they perish not.

THE words "sanctification" and "perseverance" are in the title, but not in the Article itself. We have found "justification" treated in the same manner in Article 13. No doubt the reason of this is, that the compilers had it in view to explain technical terms of theology, but not to use them more than can be helped.

The fifteenth Article has treated of goodness from the human side, obedience rendered to the will of God. The sixteenth treats of it from the divine side, and shows it to be the product in men of God's inworking grace. The persons spoken of here, as in the four preceding Articles, are "Christ's people"; and the whole statement presupposes their redemption and regeneration. The question now to be dealt with is how this people are made meet for fellowship with God in this life, and for His most holy presence in the life to come.

The Article describes the process of sanctification, implying perseverance in grace; but also shows how the process may be marred, and the issue sadly impaired.

I. THE SANCTIFYING PROCESS AS IT OUGHT TO BE.

This process originates in the regeneration by the Holy Ghost. Thereafter the Spirit "dwells in every believer," as we have affirmed in the eleventh Article. And we endeavour to describe the blessed change which the indwelling Spirit effects. Three operations are specified: and then two results affirmed.

1. Purifying.—"*We believe that the Holy Spirit dwelling in all Christ's people purifies their hearts.*"—This goes at once to the root of the matter. Our Lord Jesus, Who "knew what is in man," traced impurity of speech and conduct to impurity of heart. Evil thoughts and desires come from within. They proceed out of the heart, and defile the man. Therefore all remedies for the state of man, which do not reach and sweeten the hidden fountain, are quite inadequate. We must have the Spirit to create in us a clean heart.

The purifying energy is that of the Holy Spirit: the purifying element is the Word of Truth. In so far as we

give serious heed to the Word, we place ourselves in the line of blessing. St. Peter wrote: "Ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth".

2. Empowering.—"*Enabling them to do freely and cheerfully that which the will of God requires.*"—Man is not only impure in heart, but also impotent and ineffective for the service of righteousness. He needs not only to be purified, but to be strengthened with might by the Spirit in the inner man.

So said the ancient piety: "The Lord is the strength of my life"; "I will go in the strength of Jehovah God". So said New Testament piety: "I can do all things through Christ, Which strengtheneth me". And one has only to think of the opposition which the spiritual life encounters, and the temptations to unworthy compromise which so readily suggest themselves even to well-meaning men, to be aware that consistent goodness demands moral courage and strenuous resolve. Most welcome, therefore, is the fortifying grace of that indwelling Spirit Who upholds as the Spirit of might, while He purifies and consecrates as the Spirit of holiness; and all this in order to our rendering to the will of God a free and cheerful obedience.

3. Guiding.—"*They follow the guidance of His Word.*"—The living guide is the Spirit; the guide-book is His Word, contained and conveyed in the Scriptures, for which all spiritually-minded persons have a marked reverence and affection. The direction of the Spirit is given to them through the serious and prayerful study of the sacred oracles, with a view to ascertain the way of faith and duty.

This gives no sanction to the practice of opening the Bible, and singling out a sentence that may catch the eye for guidance in some perplexity. The Spirit, one need hardly say, is free to use the Word as He sees meet, and to

apply any saying of Scripture, or any group of sayings, for the direction of a human soul ; but our part is to search the Scriptures, and not merely dip into them here and there ; and when we fasten on particular statements, admonitions, or promises, to examine the bearing of them on our own position, asking, at the same time, for light from the Spirit of wisdom and of truth.

Such being the operations of the Sanctifier, we state the result as follows :—

(1) Strength for service.—“ *In measure as they surrender themselves to the Spirit of Christ, and follow the guidance of His Word, they receive strength for daily service.*”—By yielding, Christians prevail. By surrender, they wax strong. Of the strength for obedience something has been said already ; but here is a new point. It is diurnal strength for diurnal service to God and man. Not that all days are alike. As in common experience, so also in spiritual, some are far more critical and eventful than others ; and for these special help is given. But a man is what he is day after day : and a Christian is in the right groove when he offers his daily sacrifice of devotion and of doing good, taking guidance from the Word of God. To such a man, and for such a life, the Lord will give daily bread, not for the body only, but also for the soul—manna morning by morning—and will impart strength and renewal day by day, for taking up the cross, denying self, and serving God.

(2) Growth in holiness.—“ *And grow in holiness after the image of their Lord.*”—Holiness is separateness from evil. God is holy ; and His redeemed are to be holy unto Him. All Christians are called to holiness, but it is a mould of character which they acquire only by degrees. They grow into it, conforming to a type, as is the way with all vital growth,—and that type, “ the image of their Lord ”.

Holiness is never to be measured by likeness to this saint or that, but always by the degree of assimilation to Christ. It is the object of God's fore-ordination, that we should be "conformed to the image of His Son".

Because it is growth, the assimilation we speak of is unconscious. I grow like one with whom I associate much, or whom I warmly admire; but I do not myself know or feel the growing resemblance. Others may see it, but not I. So it is with a Christian in process of sanctification. He thinks of Christ, looks to Christ, communes with Christ, and in this way insensibly reflects the image of Christ. Others may observe that he is becoming a Christ-like man, but he does not see it. What he is painfully conscious of is his unlikeness to the Lord; and this consciousness keeps him humble, and eager for more and more of the sanctifying grace of the Holy Spirit.

The continuance of sanctification inferring growth in holiness, is the perseverance of saints—fully described and vindicated in the Canons of the Council of Dort (Fifth Head of Doctrine) and the Westminster Confession (chap. xvii.). But in both these documents, as, indeed, in all honest treatment of this theme, it is acknowledged that there are many appearances to the contrary. There are many failures; many deflections from the way of holiness. Accordingly, our Article treats of:—

II. SANCTIFICATION: HOW IT IS MARRED.

It is by no means to be inferred that such inconsistency as grieves the Holy Spirit is inevitable, and on that account excusable. It need not be; it ought not to be. But it does occur; and the untoward fact cannot be ignored.

"*Or if departing from God through unwatchfulness and neglect of prayer.*"—So the case of spiritual declension is

explained. Instead of growth in grace there comes a blight upon the soul. Affection is withdrawn from God our Saviour, though the Christian profession is continued. And the mischief is traced to relaxation of watchfulness and neglect of prayer. These two evils are the beginning of declension, and, through these, the declension continues; because by unwatchfulness the soul is laid open to evil influences, and restraint of prayer impedes or blocks that communion with God which is indispensable to growth in holiness. The result is departure from the living God, and a spiritual decay which invites disaster.

“*Any of them lapse into spiritual languor.*”—Languor of the body does not excite alarm, yet it may be full of danger. It betrays a decaying vigour, an enfeebled circulation of blood, an insufficient assimilation of necessary food, and a consequent lack of vital energy. There may be no pain, but the tired look, feeble step, and indisposition to exertion reveal that mischief is at work in the body. Just so in the spirit of man. When the channels of spiritual life and fellowship are clogged, and a watch is not kept over the senses and desires, there may be no pain in the conscience or alarm in the mind, but there is a lapse into spiritual languor. It shows itself in a type of religion which is neither wide awake nor sound asleep, but drowsy; neither quite motionless nor ready for exertion, but torpid; neither cold nor hot, but lukewarm.

“*Or fall into grievous sins.*”—The phrase is taken from the Westminster Confession. These sins, even when successfully hidden from observation, constitute an affront to the sanctifying Spirit; and when they are known, bring discredit on the Christian name. Obviously it is not discreet to name in an Article of religion, and by naming to suggest sins into which Christians have fallen, and yet have been re-

stored. Enough that we face the mournful fact that some men who had apparently begun to "follow after holiness" have thereafter sinned heinously. And on this we have two things to say: (1) A grievous sin is no whit less grievous because of the past reputation and profession of him who commits it. It is all the more grievous. (2) A grievous sin in such a case does not prove that he who is guilty of it is a hypocrite, or that he will be cast away. He is a backslider, and may be pardoned and healed. He is a froward child, and may be heavily chastened, "but not killed".

"*Yet by the mercy of God Who abideth faithful they are not cast off.*"—The phraseology at the end of the Article has evidently been chosen with studied care on the one hand not to encourage licence, on the other not to suggest despair. God's mercy is not withheld from the inconsistent Christian who has lapsed into a mood of spiritual languor; no, not even though he has fallen into grievous sins; and the faithlessness of men is not permitted to shake the faithfulness of Him Who called them into the fellowship of His Son. The approval of God is taken from backsliders; the light of His countenance is withdrawn; and the sanctifying operation of His Spirit is suspended; but His mercy is not taken away, nor is His purpose of salvation changed. Discussing the "Certainty of Salvation" and St. Paul's teaching on that subject in Rom. viii., a good divine * has said: "The apostle does not rest the perseverance of the saints on the indestructible nature of faith, or on the imperishable nature of the principle of grace in the heart, or on the constancy of the believer's will, but solely on what is out of ourselves. Perseverance, he teaches us, is due to the purpose of God, to the work of Christ, to the

* Dr. Charles Hodge.

indwelling of the Holy Ghost, and to the primal source of all—the infinite, mysterious, and immutable love of God.”

So we believe that the Lord will not cast off or cast out any one whom He has received to the promise of eternal life. He will not let go His hold of any one whom He has apprehended for salvation, or let any evil power pluck a human soul out of His hand.

But does not St. Paul use the term “castaway,” and express some fear of incurring that doom? The answer is that the term does occur in the Authorised Version of 1 Cor. ix. 27, but not with reference to salvation. In that passage St. Paul refers to his service as a Christian apostle, and to the diligence which he had to exercise in his office and work, lest, after preaching to others, he should be rejected; *i.e.*, disapproved in his ministry. As to personal salvation, he had no misgiving whatever.

Undoubtedly the Bible recognises the existence both of temporary adherents to the Gospel, and of obdurate apostates; but does not admit that these had been at any time truly spiritual. Their convictions never were more than superficial, or their hearts never were knit to Christ and the Church. Of such persons St. John wrote: “They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us” (1 John ii. 19, R. V.).

“*But are chastened for their backsliding.*”—There is a rod of God for the correction of undutiful children; the sword, which has the power to slay, being reserved for His adversaries. Whom the Lord loves He chastens; and in critical cases the correction may be very sore. When King David had sinned presumptuously he got such a blow from the rod as broke his bones; nevertheless, God made those broken bones rejoice (Psalm li. 8). Far from making light

of sin by our doctrine of perseverance, we believe in no impunity. Least of all in His own children will the Heavenly Father allow evil to pass without some mark of His displeasure. They who grieve His Spirit will be visited with the chastisement of pain and loss in this world, or else will suffer a greater loss hereafter, and forfeit something of the heavenly inheritance.

“*And through repentance are restored to His favour, so that they perish not.*”—When the chastisement is laid to heart, repentance is renewed. We know that there are unhappy men, who, after dabbling in religion for a while, fall away from it, and cannot be renewed unto repentance (Heb. vi. 4-6). But it is otherwise with those in whom the Spirit of God, though grieved, abides. They are recalled to their right mind, abhor themselves, and with contrition seek the face of God. Then He restores them to favour—at least, to this extent: “That they perish not”. This is the one thing secured. They may never become what they would have been had they continued steadfast; but they will not be cast into “the perdition of ungodly men.”

This is only a *minimum*. Aim far higher. The will of God is your sanctification; and sanctification should prepare for the inheritance of the saints in light.



ARTICLE XVII.
OF THE CHURCH.

We acknowledge one holy Catholic Church, the innumerable company of saints of every age and nation, who, being united by the Holy Spirit to Christ their Head, are one body in Him, and have communion with their Lord and with one another: further, we receive it as the will of Christ that His Church on earth should exist as a visible and sacred brotherhood, consisting of those who profess faith in Jesus Christ and obedience to Him, together with their children, and organised for the confession of His name, the public worship of God, the upbuilding of the saints, and the proclamation of the Gospel; and we acknowledge, as a part, more or less pure, of this universal brotherhood, every particular Church throughout the world which professes this faith in Jesus Christ and obedience to Him, as Divine Lord and Saviour.

THE doctrine of the Church, here stated, entirely corresponds with the teaching of the Reformed Confessions. It

has no breath of sectarianism, but is large-souled and genuinely catholic.

Two thoughts are dominant in this Article. (1) The unity of the Church. (2) The distinction between the Church in its divine ideal and the Church in manifestation and profession.

A distinction is often drawn between the Church militant and the Church triumphant. But every one understands that this does not mean two separate Churches. It is one Church, as there is one family "in heaven and on earth".

The holy Church on earth must fight
Against the devil and his might;
The Church in heaven with war hath done,
And yet the two are only one.

But the objection is taken to the distinction drawn between the Church spiritual and the Church of Christian profession, that it makes two Churches out of one. And some colour is given to the objection by the use of the phrases Church invisible and Church visible. These terms are not well chosen, and we avoid them. But the distinction which they were meant to indicate is one which we are bound to maintain. We, therefore, acknowledge the one Church of God, and add that it exists on earth as "a visible and sacred brotherhood".

The Roman doctrine denies the distinction altogether, and maintains that the Church is essentially a visible organised society, out of which there is no promise of salvation. To such society they ascribe all the powers and prerogatives which are assigned in Holy Writ to the Church Spiritual, the Body of Christ.*

* "The Roman Church teaches that the Church is *principaliter* Institution; the Protestant that it is *principaliter* Fellowship."—W. B. Pope in Winer's *Confessions of Christendom*.

The Article is in three parts :—

I. OF THE CHURCH IN ESSENTIAL IDEA.

“ *We acknowledge one holy catholic Church, the innumerable company of saints of every age and nation.*”—It is “one,” for it is the mystical Body of Christ. But the very fact that it is one shows us that it may not be identified with any outward organisation of Christians ; for no one but a sheer bigot can think that all the saved people on the earth are enclosed within the particular Church to which he is attached. The unity must be and is in spirit, not in form.

It is “holy,” for all its members are called to holiness ; and their fellowship constitutes “a holy temple in the Lord”. Israel was a holy nation ; but now from all nations a holy people is gathered—“the innumerable company of saints”.

It is “catholic,” because it embraces men of all regions and all races, partakers of a common faith, cheered and purified by a common hope of glory.

“ *Who, being united by the Holy Spirit to Christ their Head, are one body in Him, and have communion with their Lord and with one another.*”—As individual Christianity, so also collective Christianity has for its Author the Holy Spirit. Men do not “join the Church,” but are joined to the Lord by the power of the Spirit, and by the same power are formed together into His body the Church. One cannot be in Christ, without being in the Church in this sense of the word. One cannot be in the Church, without being in Christ. Indeed, the Bible does not mention Church-membership, except in this manner : “We are members of His body”. And we have such membership through faith and love—not the profession, but the reality.

This fundamental doctrine of the Church essential, the body mystical of Christ, is set forth in several of the old

Confessions. Thus the Belgic: "We believe and profess one catholic or universal Church, which is a holy congregation and assembly of true Christian believers". The Scottish: "Ane Kirk, that is to say, ane company and multitude of men chosen of God, who richtly worship Him by true faith in Christ Jesus". The Irish Articles of Religion (A.D. 1615), which form the link between the Thirty-nine Articles and the Westminster Symbols: "There is but one catholic Church (out of which there is no salvation), containing the universal company of all the saints, gathered together in one body, under one Head, Jesus Christ". The Westminster Confession: "The catholic or universal Church, which is invisible, consists of the whole number of the elect, that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one, under Christ the Head thereof; and is the spouse, the body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all".

With this conception of the one Church of God in our minds, we are not so much perplexed or alarmed by the diversities of Church order which appear, as they are and must be who draw no distinction between essence and form. We regret the excessive multiplication of Churches for many reasons; but it does not invade the unity of the Church spiritual and essential, to which perpetuity and universality belong. Perpetuity, for it must continue till the Lord accomplishes the number of His elect. Universality, because it embraces the saints of all nations. *Ubi Christus, ibi ecclesia.*

II. OF THE CHURCH IN PRESENT MANIFESTATION.

"Further, we receive it as the will of Christ that His Church on earth should exist as a visible and sacred brotherhood."—Such is the concrete form given to the spiritual essence. "Brotherhood" is a better word for our purpose than "society," which is hackneyed, and is apt to suggest

something founded by men. The Lord Jesus Christ is the Founder and the Foundation of the Church as a sacred brotherhood; and its claims on us are superior to those of any other association or federation whatever.

“*Consisting of those who profess faith in Jesus Christ, and obedience to Him, together with their children.*”—The Westminster Confession says: “Those that profess the true religion, and their children”. We prefer the language of our Article regarding the necessary profession, because one may surely be within the pale of the Church who is not yet sufficiently instructed in “the true religion” to make intelligent profession thereof. The children of professed Christians are recognised in both documents; for no theory of the Church seems to us to satisfy Scripture, or history, or the instincts of the heart, which leaves the children of a Christian family outside the pale. We believe it to be the will of Christ that the Church should enclose the household, when the parents profess, or even one of the parents professes, faith and obedience. Our Lord did not charge the young children to come to Him, or embrace the Gospel, when they should be old enough to think and act for themselves, but took them in His arms at once when their mothers brought them for His blessing. And in more than one epistle to a Church St. Paul took thought for the children, and wrote to them as within the visible and sacred brotherhood.

The Church is, and ought to be, organised and fitly framed together. What its order and constitution ought to be is not discussed in this place, but the ends for which the organisation should exist are stated as four in number; *viz.*, witness, worship, edification, and evangelisation.

1. “*Organised for the confession of His (Christ's) name.*”—This needs no exposition. It is obvious from the

language of our Lord before His Ascension (Acts i. 8) that the first use of the Spirit-born Church is to bear witness to Jesus Christ unto the uttermost part of the earth. Each Christian person is called to confess His holy name ; and the Church, or brotherhood of Christians, in all forms of it and in all places, is intended to bear a combined and continuous testimony to the world that Jesus is "the Christ, the Son of the living God". Simon Peter, making that confession, was the first stone of witness in "the foundation of apostles and prophets," and ever since stone has been laid upon stone in the great edifice of testimony to our Lord and His divine power to save.

2. "*The public worship of God.*"—Private worship may be rendered without any definite Church fellowship, but for public worship we should "assemble with the Church," as Paul and Barnabas did at Antioch. The Church is bound to regulate and render such public worship according to the New Testament, as "having boldness to enter into the holy place by the blood of Jesus". Many forms of religion are content with the adoration by priests at the shrine, and the desultory devotion of individual worshippers in the outer courts, varied by occasional festivals that draw the multitude ; but pure Christianity requires the worshipping assembly or Church, in which all devout spirits form a holy priesthood offering spiritual sacrifice.

3. "*The upbuilding of the saints.*"—Everything in the Church should "be done unto edifying". The public teaching, the administration of sacraments, the intercourse of counsel and sympathy, and the mutual intercession—all should tend to the building up of saints in their most holy faith, and the building of them together by the cohesive force of brotherly kindness and charity.

4. "*And the proclamation of the Gospel.*"—No doubt this

lies as an obligation on every believer. According to his opportunity, he ought to publish the good tidings. But the great enterprise of the propagation of the Gospel through the world calls for the combined energies of the Church. Individualism is inadequate to the training of skilled preachers, the defraying of inevitable expenses, the translation, publication, and circulation of the Bible in the languages of the world, and the maintenance of a sufficient and continuous supply of missionaries at central stations. This calls for the organised action of the Church. We do not say, of a Missionary Society formed by men, with a pecuniary title to membership, but of the Church which God has formed for this very purpose.

Such are the chief ends for which the Church exists in concrete form or forms on the earth. The Westminster Confession has two chapters—one on the Church, and the other on the Communion of Saints. The latter (chapter xxvi.) has this fine statement: "Saints by profession are bound to maintain a holy fellowship and communion in the worship of God, and in performing such other spiritual services as tend to their mutual edification; as also in relieving each other in outward things, according to their several abilities and necessities. Which communion, as God offereth opportunity, is to be extended unto all those who in every place call upon the name of the Lord Jesus." No Puritan narrowness, surely, in that last sentence, but a generous catholic mind.

III. OF CHURCHES IN THE CHURCH.

We must say something of the divers communities into which modern Christians are divided or distributed. We offer no opinion here on the separations which have occurred, whether they be justifiable or not. Probably an impartial judgment would hold that some of them have been

and are unavoidable, while others that once had some reason have now hardly an excuse. But these are questions of detail. The Article takes facts as they are, and makes the best of them.

“And we acknowledge as a part, more or less pure, of this universal brotherhood, every particular Church throughout the world which professes this faith in Jesus Christ and obedience to Him, as Divine Lord and Saviour.”—As a matter of fact, there must be “particular Churches”. Even if all the Christians within a realm or nation could be held together in one, the habits of distinct nations and the use of divers languages would still require for each country a separate Church. No ground could be adduced from Scripture, or from reason, for squeezing the Christians of all countries and languages into one huge organisation, subject to one central control. There is no universal bishop but the Lord Jesus Christ; no Holy See with world-wide authority, but His throne.

A particular Church in this or some other country may seem to us ill-taught and ill-constituted, but if it professes faith and obedience, as above stated, we have no right to deny that it forms a part of the general visible Church of God. Those who do not recognise Christ as “Divine Lord and Saviour” may call themselves Christians, and many of them are most exemplary people. We do not presume to say how Unitarians, and other deists, may be regarded by the Lord: but remembering His words in St. Matt. xvi. 16-18, we are unable to include them in our conception of the Church.

We are widely separated from some of the particular Churches. We even protest against their errors in doctrine and corruptions of worship. Therefore we have to protect our consistency by insertion of the significant phrase

“*more or less pure,*” which is taken from the Irish Articles already quoted, and from the Westminster Confession. The latter document contains this sentence: “Particular Churches, which are members of the catholic Church visible, are more or less pure, according as the doctrine of the Gospel is taught and embraced, ordinances administered, and public worship performed more or less purely in them”.

This last statement suggests those “Notes of the Church,” *i.e.*, of the Church in concrete manifestation, which have been so much canvassed in ecclesiastical controversy. Many of those which are advanced by Roman Catholic divines, we deny to be marks at all; *e.g.*, submission to the pope, power to work miracles, and infallibility in matters of faith. Protestants, both Lutheran and Reformed, took the preaching of the Gospel and the due administration of the Sacraments to be the external Notes of the Church.* The Scottish Confession added a third; *viz.*: “Ecclesiastical discipline uprightly ministered, as God’s Word prescribes, whereby vice is reprovèd and virtue nourished”. The Scottish Reformation, like the Genevan, was earnestly applied to life as well as to doctrine and worship.

It is the duty of every Christian to be openly and zealously identified with the most pure Church that is within his reach. Of the obligations to the brotherhood which this involves, the next Article speaks. Enough here to urge that all true Christians are Churchmen in the best sense of the term, and ought to cultivate a Church-consciousness, shunning the narrow temper of sectaries and partisans.

* See Augsburg Conf., art. vii. Second Helvetic, xvii. 17.



ARTICLE XVIII.

OF CHURCH ORDER AND FELLOWSHIP.

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ, the sole Head of His Church, has appointed its worship, teaching, discipline and government to be administered according to His will revealed in Holy Scripture, by officers chosen for their fitness, and duly set apart to their office ; and although the visible Church, even in its purest branch, may contain unworthy members, and is liable to err, yet believers ought not lightly to separate themselves from its communion, but are to live in fellowship with their brethren : which fellowship is to be extended, as God gives opportunity, to all who in every place call upon the name of the Lord Jesus.

THIS must be understood of the Church in the concrete—the “ visible and sacred brotherhood ”—though the heart of the matter always lies in the communion of saints who are saints indeed, bearing a common relation to God in Christ, and possessing a common life in the Spirit. So far as practicable, this essential and vital fellowship is to be maintained and exhibited among those who have been called

“saints by profession”. And a right understanding of this is highly conducive to the comfort and usefulness of Christians, as persons not only saved one by one, but also linked together in a community.

I. OF CHURCH ORDER.

This is a subject which many persons, otherwise intelligent, depreciate and dislike. They attend this church or that, because it is the nearest to their homes, or the music is good, or the service agreeable to their taste, but as to its administration they know and care very little. In their eyes church discipline is tyranny. If anything should go against their mind they would leave that church and go to another, sure of a welcome in these days of ecclesiastical competition. It is a time of fickleness and self-pleasing. All the more need to teach the truth about church order.

Under this title we do not specify any distinctive Church polity as *de fide*. Neither did our ancestors who drew up the confession at Westminster. The subject of polity has its own importance, and is treated of in the Appendix to the Twenty-four Articles; but it is placed in that subsidiary position just because it is not in the front rank of religious truths. Enough to put it forth as our faith that the Church of God is no formless heap, but an organic whole with an orderly and authoritative administration, which is derived neither from the clergy nor from the laity, but from the Lord Jesus Christ.

“*We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ, the sole Head of His Church.*”—All the Reformed Confessions lay emphasis on the Headship of Christ as implying direction and rule. The Westminster Confession calls Him “King and Head”; but the former title is not appropriate in this place. The Bible nowhere speaks of a King of the Church; and the

conception has slipped in through a mistaken identification of the Church with the Kingdom of God or Kingdom of heaven. These are in correspondence with each other, but there is a distinction between them which we do not wish to lose. Therefore, we are well content with the statement for which we have St. Paul's authority (Eph. iv. 15; Col. i. 18) that Jesus Christ is Head of the Church, and so has the right to influence the feeling and movement of the body, and to command and control its activities.

The Headship of our Lord over the Mystical Body, *i.e.*, the genuine spiritual Church, no reader of the New Testament can dispute. But the organised community of such as profess faith and obedience, together with their children, ought to follow the ideal, and body forth the conception of the Church essential and spiritual. Therefore, we affirm that Christ is rightful Head of the visible Church also, so that all Church power is derived from Him and to be exercised in His name.

We also maintain that there is no other Head of the Church but the Lord Jesus Christ. His sole headship is contradicted both in theory and practice over a great part of Christendom. It is represented that Christ is the Supreme Head indeed, but that there is a subordinate terrestrial head also. We ask where this is to be found in the New Testament, or in primitive Christianity. When and where did our Lord delegate His authority over the Church to a temporal head as His vicar? To our reasonable demand we get no satisfaction; and, therefore, we altogether reject the claim of the Pope at Rome to be honoured and obeyed as head of the Church. We also refuse to acknowledge our own sovereign, or any other earthly potentate, as in any proper sense, head of the Church, or "supreme governor and judge in causes ecclesiastical". The civil and ecclesiastical

spheres are different in their nature, and the qualifications for civil and ecclesiastical jurisdiction are different and may not be confounded. In and over the Church, as administering spiritual things, the sovereign of the realm has no rightful sway—none whatever.

“Has appointed its worship, teaching, discipline and government to be administered by officers chosen for their fitness, and duly set apart to their office.”—The sole Head of the Church being in heaven, or, though present with the Church on earth by His Spirit, yet unseen, how is the administration under His authority to be carried on? The answer is, “by officers”; and this expression is chosen to avoid in this place any affirmation regarding “Holy Orders”. We acknowledge two orders, not three. We find in the New Testament bishops or presbyters, and deacons. We do not find bishops, priests, and deacons. But the Twenty-four Articles are “of the Faith,” and may be useful, it is hoped, to Churches that are not Presbyterian. Therefore we relegate this question of orders to the Appendix, showing that we attach to it secondary, not primary, importance. What is essential to the orderly administration of the Church under Christ is that it be committed to men in office; that these be chosen for their fitness, capable men and worthy of respect; and that they be duly set apart, or ordained, not mere committee-men, serving for a term and throwing off their duties at pleasure, but men seriously devoted to Christ’s service in the Church for life, or, at all events, for a long term of years.

It is not said that they must be chosen by the Christian people; because, though such is the fitting and reasonable course in the case of appointing officers over a particular congregation, those who are to fill positions of a wider and more arduous character may be more properly selected by

some board of supervision, or Church assembly. The point of importance is that men are not to choose themselves, or push their candidature, or in any way grasp at promotion and power; but are to wait till their fitness for office is recognised by others.

“*According to His will revealed in Holy Scripture.*”— Church officers have no leave to “lord it over God’s heritage,” or to issue decrees and censures at their pleasure. Their duty is to construe the will of the Lord as conveyed in the Scriptures, and applying this according to their best judgment to present conditions and wants, to carry on the whole spiritual administration according to Christ Jesus. This does not mean that they must be able to cite express words of Scripture in support of every direction they give or every decision at which they arrive. But they are to regulate and conduct the worship and work of the Church in conformity with the principles enunciated by our Lord and His apostles. And this should be enough to exclude carnal policy, invidious respect of persons, connivance at evil, and the imposition of a burdensome ceremonial on the freemen of Christ.

The idea of a Church administration not subject to courts of civil jurisdiction is unwelcome and alarming to many minds. They think at once and with repugnance of courts of ecclesiastics, judging according to the canon law; and they protest in the name of human liberty that there must be an appeal to the judges of the realm. But, according to our statement, the law to be administered is not canon law, but the will of Christ as revealed in Holy Scripture. The judges are not a close clerical caste, but officers chosen by the Church. And their jurisdiction does not touch the liberty of the subject, or wield civil penalties, but confines itself to the region of conscience, and the question of Church

standing and privilege. We do not deny that such courts are fallible, as the civil courts are also. We do not dispute that there ought even to be an appeal from their decision even, in the last resort; only not to courts of civil jurisdiction, nor to the occupants of earthly thrones. The ultimate appeal is to the Lord Himself, Who, at His coming in His kingdom, will know how to redress all injustice and remedy every wrong.

II. OF CHURCH FELLOWSHIP.

The chief objects to be served by such fellowship have been enumerated under the previous Article. The present statement refers to patient continuance in the fellowship of the Church, and is directed against separatism and schism.

“And although the visible Church, even in its purest branch, may contain unworthy members, and is liable to err.”—The fact must be faced, that the Church, as seen and known on earth, does not at all come up to the ideal of a communion of saints; nor is there anything very surprising in this. Individual Christians, as they appear, do not reach the ideal of what they ought to be under their holy calling: and so it is not to be wondered at that the collection or assembly of professed Christians falls short both in faith and in practice of what ought to be found in a people “called saints”.

The Reformed Churches generally make admissions similar to that which is contained in our Article. Thus the twenty-sixth of the Thirty-nine Articles recognises a mingling of “the evil with the good” in the visible Church; and proceeds to require that in the discipline of the community, “ministers found guilty of offences be deposed”. There is no reason, however, why discipline should be confined to “ministers”. The Westminster Confession says: “The purest Churches under heaven are subject both to mixture

and to error". The mixture is of worthy and unworthy members. The error may be in doctrine or in practice. In such statements, our fathers had in view (1) to disclaim their own infallibility, as they had already denied that of the Pope; (2) to stimulate endeavours for the purifying of Churches; (3) to discourage that separatism which tries to justify itself on the plea that the Churches are faulty, and that it is necessary to withdraw from them in order to form a pure communion.

"*Yet believers ought not lightly to separate themselves from its communion, but are to live in fellowship with their brethren.*"—The word "lightly" is introduced because it is impossible to deny that in the case of a Church seriously tainted in doctrine and practice, an individual, if he cannot bring about reformation, may be compelled for conscience' sake to take an attitude of open protest. But the general rule is that one should be very slow to abandon or alter his Church; and the particular warning is against breaking up Church relations with a view to form some coterie which only regenerate and spiritual persons may enter. That is a policy of censoriousness, disintegration, and schism. Yet they who follow it are often heard to condemn sectarianism and dilate on oneness in Christ. They seem to think that by discrediting and forsaking His visible Church in all its historical forms, they will realise what has never yet been seen on earth—an absolutely pure communion.

When we express ourselves in this way, we may be asked how we justify our fathers in their separation from the Catholic Church. Our answer is that they did not leave the Catholic Church. They renounced the Pope, and all such dogmas, traditions, and ceremonies as obscured the Gospel of grace. But they were Reformers, not sect-makers. When they succeeded in reforming the historic

Church of their country, they remained in its fellowship. When they failed, they were driven to worship apart. But not one of them changed his creed to say: "I believe in the Protestant Church". They all continued to say: "I believe in the holy catholic Church".

If, further, it be demanded of us, why we are separate in England from the historic Church of this country, our answer is: (1) That this historic Church was in the judgment of our fathers insufficiently reformed; (2) That they were not permitted to abide in that Church with a view to complete its reformation, but excluded by Act of Parliament for not conforming to certain fashions and ceremonies in worship. No one who has any true conception of the spiritual origin and nature of the Church, can hold that Parliament has any right to determine the worship or the fellowship of saints.

Still further, if we are asked how we justify the splits and secessions which have occurred in the annals of our own Churches, we are not concerned to justify them. Men of the period felt constrained to make them, breaking the peace, as they judged, for righteousness' sake and for the truth's sake. They may have been mistaken, or they may not. One thing is worthy to be remembered, that our fathers never abandoned a Church on a mere ground of individualism, or to make a holy nest apart for themselves and a select company. They always were Churchmen, seeking through their testimonies and sufferings to save the Church of God from spiritual damage.

We are not bound to vindicate all that our ecclesiastical ancestors said or did. Our duty is to ponder well the lessons of history, alike for example and for warning, to hold fast the heritage of truth, order, and liberty, which has been transmitted to us, and to beware of letting our minds fall

into the narrow grooves of sectism. This last sentiment is expressed in the final clause of the Article.

“*Which (brotherly) fellowship is to be extended, as God gives opportunity, to all who in every place call upon the name of the Lord Jesus.*”—The words are taken from the twenty-sixth chapter of the Westminster Confession. Where is the Puritan sourness? Where is the Calvinistic bigotry? Has any Church whatever put into authorised words a more kind and comprehensive recognition of the Christian brotherhood without any condition of orders, administration, or forms of service? Christ’s people are our people: His brethren our brethren all the world over.

A formalist is perplexed by the slightest divergence from the usages of his particular Church. He knows so little of the substance of religion that he recognises it only in one shape and one dress. But an enlightened and large-hearted Christian rises above slavery to form, knows the truth as it is in Jesus, and loves all those that are “of the truth”. Thus he finds brothers wherever he goes, and is at home everywhere with the children of God.



ARTICLE XIX.
OF HOLY SCRIPTURE.

We believe that God, Who manifests Himself in creation and providence, and especially in the spirit of man, has been pleased to reveal His mind and will for our salvation at successive periods and in various ways; and that this Revelation has been, so far as needful, committed to writing by men inspired of the Holy Spirit, in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, which are therefore to be devoutly studied by all as God's written Word or message to mankind: and we reverently acknowledge the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scriptures to be the Supreme Judge in questions of faith and duty.

A STATEMENT on this subject cannot be longer delayed. In Article XVI. we have spoken of following "the guidance of His Word"; and in Article XVIII. of "Christ's will revealed in Holy Scripture". What is this Holy Scripture?

The word "Revelation" is of larger meaning than "Bible" or "Scripture". It denotes the unveiling of the

unseen or undiscerned. The revelation of God therefore is all that process by which He has made Himself known to man. And the object of this Article is to state how the revelation came and how it took definite body and shape in the sacred Book.

I. OF DIVINE REVELATION UNWRITTEN.

"We believe that God, Who manifests Himself in creation and providence, and especially in the spirit of man."—Creation displays the power and wisdom of God. Providence shows Him all-pervasive, all-sustaining, all-controlling. And the spirit of man by its intellectual and moral constitution suggests, postulates, and helps us to apprehend the supreme intelligence and moral attributes of God. Even though we had no Scripture, we have enough around and within us to persuade a serious thinker that God is, and is above all—perfect in knowledge and in might, and in those qualities which are recognised as moral by the human heart and conscience.

"Has been pleased to reveal His mind and will for our salvation at successive periods and in various ways."—This revelation goes beyond "the light of nature". It does not come through the study of creation or providence, or from the construction or intuition of the spirit of man. It has come through significant acts of God towards and among men, interpositions in history, and communications through chosen messengers and prophets. Given at "successive periods," this revelation has a cumulative force. Given in "divers ways," it has been for men of all sorts and all nations, but in the main was confined for many centuries to one people chosen from the nations to receive, preserve, and transmit the knowledge of God.

Every one is aware of the distinction drawn between the

manifestation of God in nature and providence and that which is declared to us concerning Him in the Bible. But here is another distinction, and one that may show us the way through many difficulties. It is the distinction between the revelation spoken and the record thereof, or revelation written. It is one thing to say God spoke to the Hebrew fathers in the prophets, and at last in His Son: "Holy men spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost". It is another thing to say that the things so spoken have been in good measure written for our learning. Let each statement stand for itself, and be responsible only for what follows from itself. Revelation cannot be limited to the Bible. There were servants of God who knew and did His will during hundreds of years before a single book of Scripture was in existence. Again, in the beginning of our era, the Church existed for years and spread abroad, before a line of the New Testament had been published. But there was revelation of God and of Christ orally conveyed.

II. OF REVELATION WRITTEN.

"*And that this Revelation has been, so far as needful, committed to writing by men inspired of the Holy Spirit, in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments.*"—What was at first oral was exposed to risks of corruption and oblivion, to escape which it was set down in authentic written form. *Litera scripta manet.* Not all that God had conveyed to, and through, His prophets, but so much thereof as He saw to be "needful" to mankind. So the French Confession says: "The Word of God, which was in the beginning revealed through oracles, was afterwards committed to writing in the books which we call the Holy Scriptures". It is this record of a revelation, translated out of the original tongues, which we call the English Bible.

Keeping in view the fact that revelation came first and the record of it second, we are the better able to understand the following characteristics of the Bible:—

1. *Its historical form, and the progress of its thought.*—The Bible is not at all a collection of old hymns, or mythic stories and traditions, unconnected with human history, and covered with a grey mist of indefinite antiquity. No more is it a simultaneous outburst of religious thought and feeling from one mind, or at one period, like the Koran. In large measure it is a book of historical facts, defying contradiction. It tells of a knowledge of God that came in a historical fashion, through historical persons, and along a line of historical succession. It is the record of a revelation which grew throughout the ages, and which reached its fulness in the manifestation of the Father in the Son, and in the teaching of the apostles through the power of the Holy Spirit. In a word, our Bible is not an oracle ready made and dropped from heaven, but a record of truth historically and progressively conveyed.

As we have indicated, this differentiates the Bible from the Koran, which is the production of one age, one race, and, in the main, one mind. It also puts it in strong contrast with those ancient religious poems, the Vedas of Hindostan. These, indeed, are not from one mind or one period, but are the effusions of poets who appeared at intervals during several generations: but in the Vedas is no advance such as there is in the Bible. The later poems have no more divine knowledge than the earlier, if so much. “Of orderly development,” says an American scholar, “of a progressive self-manifestation of one Deity, there is not in the Vedas any trace. On the contrary, they run into confusions. We are not led by them out into the clear; we do not gain, when the last poet has seen his vision, any one exalted con-

ception from which we can survey the whole course of their revelations. They lead up to no height from which all becomes clear. The sacred literature of the East reminds us rather of an Indian jungle. It is luxuriant ; it abounds in tropical fruits, but it is a pathless confusion. We look into the Bible, and it is the pathway of the Lord. The Vedas present a shifting play of lights and shadows. Sometimes the light seems to grow brighter, but the day never comes. We are left still to dream. In the Bible the promise grows till the shining of the perfect day."*

2. *Its diversities of form and style.*—The writers of the Bible were many ; and of these not a few are unknown. It must be remembered that the men who recorded the revelation are not always the men to whom the revelation was imparted. One of the most momentous facts in the history of religion is that God made Himself known to Abraham His friend ; but who wrote the account of this, which we find in Genesis, no one can tell. There is no reason to think that it is from Abraham's pen. It has been long believed that Moses gave the biographical sketches of the patriarchs their place and setting in that venerable book : but, even so, Moses lived five hundred years after Abraham. Very important also is the revelation of Jehovah in degenerate days to the prophets Elijah and Elisha ; but no one knows who wrote the record thereof in the Books of the Kings. Above all, God revealed Himself in the Son of His love ; but the Lord Jesus wrote not a line of our New Testament. It was left to the evangelists to record that great theophany.

Then the various writers of the Bible, writing without any concert or prearrangement, set down, every man his own portion in his own way, and in the style which suited his

* Newman Smyth's *Old Faiths in New Light*, chap. ii.

theme and his cast of mind. Elevated poetry was not attempted by Ezra the scribe : and, on the other hand, the exactitude of the annalists is not to be looked for in the hards and prophets.

Another point is to be kept in mind. The writers in question had no knowledge that they were composing parts of a Bible for the use of all mankind. Hence the unaffected tone of each, and the ineffaceable stamp of the period at which he wrote.

3. *The inspiration of the writing.*—We say advisedly “of the writing,” for it is the Scripture which St. Paul affirms to be “*theopneustic*” (2 Tim. iii. 16). That “holy men spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” is a great truth ; but not enough for us who cannot hear them speak. What we require is an authentic report of the revelation of God which was made through patriarchs, poets, prophets, and apostles. And this is what we have in the Bible. Various men of God, sometimes the same as the original channels of the revelation, sometimes not, wrote the report or record thereof in certain Hebrew and Greek books, using such natural sources of information as were open to them, and following each one the style of composition which was most congenial to his mind. These books, again, have been translated, with more or less accuracy, into modern tongues. It is enough that the translators be honest and competent scholars : but we want to be sure of a higher qualification in the original writers ; and we express this by saying that the writing was “by men inspired of the Holy Spirit”.

It does not follow that all had the same measure of inspiration ; but on the *rationale* and varying measures of this divine inbreathing, the Church does not pronounce.

Be it here observed that this statement is applied only

to the canonical "Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments," excluding the Apocryphal books which have claims on our attention, but are not received as inspired. Also, that the Church is not committed to any definite opinion as to the authorship, age, or construction of any of the sacred books, or as to the possibility of any inaccuracy being found therein through the fault of the human author. Questions of literary and historical criticism have no place in Articles of Faith.

"Which (Scriptures) are therefore to be devoutly studied by all as God's written Word or message to mankind."—It is not easy to express the relation of the term "Word of God" to the term "Holy Scripture". The former is much the larger in its meaning, because it properly applies to all communications from God, by messengers and prophets, and by His Son Jesus Christ, whether recorded or not. Our ecclesiastical predecessors did not pay much heed to this distinction. Thus the Westminster divines said in the Shorter Catechism: "The Word of God is contained in the Scriptures," as though the former were smaller than the latter. But in the Larger Catechism they said: "The Holy Scriptures are the Word of God," and in the Confession of Faith they spoke of "Holy Scripture, or the Word of God written". The French Confession affirmed that "the Word contained in these Books has proceeded from God". The Later Helvetic opens with an affirmation that "the canonical Scriptures are the true Word of God". In sufficient accordance with those statements, we declare that the Holy Writings are to be devoutly studied as "God's written Word or message". Our fathers were concerned chiefly with the assertion that Christians have in the Bible a sufficient divine authority and guide apart from Church tradition. But we have other questions to face; and the

language of our Article is carefully framed to guard and even suggest that there has been a spoken Word more ample than the written, and to urge men to search and study the written record in order to obtain from it the divine message there preserved for our learning.

“*To be devoutly studied by all.*”—“Studied,” because the writings are such as require and reward examination and reflection. While perspicuous enough to convey God’s message, not to select men only, but to mankind, they are not so written as to expose their treasures on the surface to a casual glance. They are to be investigated, compared, and pondered with patience and candour, and to be “devoutly studied,” because they are sacred books. “Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy Law.”

“*Studied by all.*”—This is a protest against the restriction on the perusal of the Bible by the laity imposed by the Latin Church. The Fourth Rule in the Roman Catholic Index makes the following assertion: “It is manifest from experience that if the Holy Bible, translated into the vulgar tongue, be indiscriminately allowed to every one, the temerity of men will cause more evil than good to arise from it”. Our reply to this is that our Lord recognised the duty and advantage of searching the Scriptures by the men of His time, and accounted for the errors of some by the circumstance that they did not know the Scriptures; but that He never pointed out any error or evil that sprang from a knowledge of Holy Writ. St. Peter speaks of some who “wrested the Scriptures to their own destruction”; but the possibility of such a misuse of them is no argument against their honest and pious use. St. Chrysostom said in his time: “From ignorance of the Sacred Scriptures hath grown the prevailing pest of heresies”.

III. OF THE DIVINE RECORD INTERPRETED.

“ *We reverently acknowledge the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scriptures to be the Supreme Judge in questions of faith and duty.*”—The reformers in the sixteenth century saw clearly that the Pope arrogated to himself not merely the office of the Lord Jesus Christ as High Priest, but also that of the Holy Ghost as the supreme and infallible Teacher of the Church. And this has become still more evident in our own time, since the infallibility of the Pope has been proclaimed by the Vatican Council. It is held as of faith throughout the Latin Church that the Bishop of Rome cannot err in laying down what is divinely true.

You may discuss the inerrancy of Scripture; but the term infallibility does not apply to a writing. You ascribe it, not to the lesson-book, but to the teacher; not to the statute-book, but to the judge. These functions of teacher and judge in religion belong, in a supreme sense, to the Holy Spirit; and He, He only, is infallible. So in the Second Helvetic Confession you read: “We do not accept any other judge in a matter of faith than God Himself declaring through the Holy Scripture what is true, what is false, what ought to be followed, and what ought to be shunned”. The Westminster Confession has a similar statement: “The Supreme Judge, by Which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and in Whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other but the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scriptures”.

Granted that this does not secure definite deliverances or judgments on points raised, like those of human judges in sifting disputes and settling suits at law. Spiritual truth does not admit of being defined and applied in that formal way. But, on the other hand, let note be taken of this prodigious advantage. The Spirit, to Whom we ascribe all

infallible opening of Scriptures, whether for the settling of controversy, or for the guidance of life, has access, swift and sure, to the minds and hearts of men, and is able to do what no human pope, teacher, or judge can do—convey the meaning and force of the Divine Word, accurately, securely, and effectually, to those who wait on His instruction. He guides the Church from age to age into a knowledge of the Scriptures, ever increasing in clearness and fulness.

The heart of all Bible-knowledge is the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ, in Whom, and not in the letter of the Book, we have eternal life. To teach this is the ever-congenial work of the Holy Ghost. Away with all Bibliolatry which, like that of the Jews, whom our Lord reproached (St. John v. 39, 40, 46, 47), shuts the eye of the soul against Him of Whom the Bible testifies! But onward let us go in that Bible-searching, which, in reliance on the interpretation and teaching of the Holy Ghost, has for its aim to “see Jesus”—to recognise and reach the Christ, the Saviour of the world!



ARTICLE XX.

OF THE SACRAMENTS.

We acknowledge Baptism and the Lord's Supper, the two Sacraments instituted by Christ, to be of perpetual obligation, as signs and seals of the new covenant, ratified in His precious blood; through the observance of which His Church is to confess her Lord and to be visibly distinguished from the rest of the world: Baptism with water into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost being the sacrament of admission into the visible Church, in which are set forth our union to Christ and regeneration by the Spirit, the remission of our sins, and our engagement to be the Lord's; and the Lord's Supper, the sacrament of communion with Christ and with His people, in which bread and wine are given and received in thankful remembrance of Him and of His sacrifice on the cross, and in which they who in faith receive the same do, after a spiritual manner, partake of the body and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, to their comfort, nourishment, and growth in grace.

TRUTHS we believe and confess ; institutions we acknowledge and observe. The former have the chief place in a religion such as ours, which plants itself in the convictions of the mind and heart : the latter, much made of in heathen religions and in corrupted forms of Christianity, have comparatively little prominence in the Christianity of the New Testament. Of ornate ceremonial such Christianity knows nothing. An inaugural rite of Baptism, the frequent assembly of the brethren at the Lord's Supper, the observance of the Lord's Day, and the supervision of the Christian community by its own officers duly appointed :—there is really nothing more. The truths of our religion are many and weighty : the institutions are few and simple.

This Article refers to the sacraments only. As to the term, it does not occur in Holy Writ, but has been introduced to mark the sacredness of those rites ; and possibly with some reference to the *sacramentum*, or military oath of allegiance among the Romans, because they indicate the relation of fealty which Christians bear to the Captain of their salvation. In the Vulgate Version of the Scriptures, *sacramentum* is introduced as the equivalent of the Greek term, “mystery” : but Baptism and the Lord's Supper are never called mysteries in any part of the New Testament.

The Latin and Greek Churches recognise seven sacraments ; giving this title not only to the two which we all acknowledge, but also to confirmation, penance, holy orders, matrimony, and extreme unction. At the other extreme some modern sects dispense with all sacraments, *e.g.*, the Friends (Quakers), who think that spirituality is opposed to symbolic rites, and the Salvation Army, which in practice neglects sacraments, though not committed in principle to their rejection. In common with all the Protestant and Reformed Churches we

acknowledge two sacraments only : Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

I. WHAT THEY HAVE IN COMMON.

Both of these rites date from the time of our Lord, and were instituted by Him. Therefore, they have an authority superior to that of any observances appointed or sanctioned by the Church at later periods.

Whatever may be said of "John's baptism," or of that which the disciples of Jesus administered in His lifetime, there is no question that Christian baptism is that which was expressly instituted by our Lord before His ascension (St. Matt. xxviii. 19). Equally certain it is that the Lord's Supper was instituted by Himself before He suffered, as three evangelists and one apostle (Paul) affirm. Hence, these sacraments are of obligation in the Church universal, which acknowledges Jesus Christ as Lord ; and do not belong in any special manner to any local or particular Christian community.

"*We acknowledge Baptism and the Lord's Supper, the two sacraments instituted by Christ, to be of perpetual obligation.*"—Here we are in opposition to those who allege that the sacraments were meant only for the apostolic age. So long as disciples are being added to the Church baptism must continue. So long as there is fellowship in the Church in the remembrance and showing forth of the Lord's death, the Lord's Supper must continue. The term "perpetual" is meant to carry on these observances till the second coming of Christ.

"*As signs and seals of the new covenant, ratified in His precious blood.*"—The sacraments represent and apply the spiritual blessings of that covenant.

The word "signs" presents no difficulty. Visible and tangible things are taken to represent or body forth blessings

which are invisible and intangible. Material elements are used as tokens or symbols of spiritual realities. Our Larger Catechism says with the Anglican Catechism:—

“How many parts are there in a sacrament?”

“Two : the outward visible sign and the inward spiritual grace.”

The water in the one sacrament is obviously a sign of some cleansing efficacy : and the bread and wine in the other are signs of the body and blood of the crucified Redeemer, and of the strength and joy conveyed thereby to believing hearts.

That the sacraments are also “seals of the covenant” or of blessings in the covenant, is a loftier and more arduous conception. In their full import and validity they are means of grace, not merely showing or signifying, but also sealing and applying the benefits of salvation. In Latin there is a close etymological connection between a seal and a sign. *Sigillum* is formed from *signum*. In ancient times one gave his signature by affixing his seal. So in our religion the New Testament of God’s grace is held to be confirmed to us by sacramental seals. Christian believers are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise : but the covenant of their redemption is sealed to them by the sacraments, so as to give them assurance and comfort. This, however, not by any magical efficacy in the ordinances, but through the enlivening of faith and the inworking of the Holy Ghost.

“*Through the observance of which the Church is to confess her Lord and to be visibly distinguished from the rest of the world.*”—Here we pass from the spiritual to the confessional and evidential view of the sacraments. Zwingli seems to have regarded this last as their only purport ; and to this view not a few Protestants tend through their recoil from the superstition of the altar and the mass. We must

be on our guard against such inadequate recognition of the sacraments ; but what is inadequate as a complete account of them, is very necessary in its own place and measure. They are historical memorials of Christian facts, and significant badges of Christian profession. They form a splendid monument to Jesus Christ, exalting His name through all the centuries and among all nations ; and they serve to differentiate Christians from all other men. In old time Israel was distinguished from the nations in similar fashion. Men spoke in the old time of the circumcision and the uncircumcision ; now we speak of the baptised and the unbaptised. Then, of those who kept the feast of the passover ; now, of those who “ communicate ” in the Lord’s Supper.

So the whole Church, professing allegiance to Christ, and presumed to be faithful in such allegiance, has been aptly styled “ the sacramental host of God’s elect ”.

II. WHEREIN THEY DIFFER.

1. *As to the elements employed.*—In Baptism we use pure water, suggestive of inward cleansing. In the Supper we take bread and wine, significant of the body of Christ and the blood of our redemption. In neither sacrament does anything depend on the quantity of the element. There is no more need of gallons of water than there is of large slices of bread and draughts of wine. The significance lies in the quality of the element, not in the quantity or bulk. Neither does it matter whether the water be running in a stream or still in a font, whether the bread be leavened or unleavened, the juice of the grape fermented or unfermented. Enough if the elements are as far as possible genuine and unadulterated.

2. *As to their purport.*—Baptism is the inaugural rite of Christianity : the Lord’s Supper marks continuance in fel-

lowship. The reason of this is, that Baptism is the sacrament of union to Christ, and the Lord's Supper is that of communion with Him. We are baptised into Christ—once. We sup with Christ—often. Accordingly, Baptism may not be administered more than once to the same person, because the union which it denotes is a spiritual act not repeated; whereas the Lord's Supper is to be observed frequently, because communion should be continuous, and the expression of it should be renewed again and again.

“Baptism with water into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost being the sacrament of admission into the visible Church, in which are set forth our union to Christ and regeneration by the Spirit, the remission of our sins, and our engagement to be the Lord's.”—As by the spiritual blessings here enumerated we enter into the Church mystical, which is the Lord's Body, so by the rite which sets forth these blessings under a sign, we are openly and solemnly admitted into the Church visible, or community of the faithful. It is not a “christening”. It does not make those Christians who were not so before. But it admits those who are really or presumably Christians within the pale of the Christ-confessing company or brotherhood.

As communion with the Lord should follow union, so the Lord's Supper follows Baptism. It may not precede. No unbaptised person may receive the Lord's Supper. Then, as to the purport of this sacrament of communion, our Article speaks thus: *“The Lord's Supper, the sacrament of communion with Christ and with His people, in which bread and wine are given and received in thankful remembrance of Him and of His sacrifice on the cross, and in which they who in faith receive the same do, after a spiritual manner, partake of the body and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, to their comfort, nourishment, and growth in grace”*.

While due honour is paid to the two sacraments of the New Testament, it is necessary to beware of exaggeration. Baptismal waters do not produce regeneration ; nor does the Lord's Supper nourish the spiritual life by any mystic power in the elements or by virtue of the devout intention of the ministrant. It is true that the Anglican Catechism describes the sacraments as "generally necessary to salvation" ; but the word "generally" was introduced to mark a dissent from the doctrine of the Latin Church, which counts sacraments necessary means of grace in the sense that the grace which they signify and convey cannot be obtained otherwise than in or through them. The Reformed Churches recognised no more than what is called "the necessity of precept". The observance of the sacraments is enjoined by our Lord, and therefore binds the Christian conscience : but, if the observance should be precluded, salvation is not forfeited, grace is not withheld.

Both on the necessity and on the efficacy of these rites, the twenty-seventh and twenty-eighth of the Thirty-nine Articles are quite in accordance with the Reformed Confessions generally : "Baptism is a sign of regeneration or new birth, whereby, as by an instrument, they that receive Baptism rightly are grafted into the Church". Participation of Christ in the Holy Supper is said to be "only after a spiritual and heavenly manner" ; and "the mean whereby the body of Christ is received and eaten in the Supper is faith". This is quite irreconcilable with the Roman doctrine of the efficacy of the mass.

The Lutheran Church is too sacramentarian in theory ; but happily maintains that the blessing in a sacrament comes to a believer only. So the Gospel is not perverted or weakened, and the truth of justification by faith is not undermined. The Roman or Papal Church asserts a mystic blessing

accruing *ex opere operato* to such as receive the sacramental elements, unless they oppose some fatal hindrance. This renders the blessing independent of penitence and faith in the receiver. All such ritualism, wherever it appears, is a delusion and a snare.

On the sacramental, as on so many other questions, the path of wisdom and of safety lies in the avoidance of extremes. Let us shun a levelling and rationalising temper on the one side; and a ritualistic and superstitious tendency on the other. As to ministrants or celebrants, we hear a cry in one quarter that all Christians as brethren are equal, all can baptise, and all may administer the Lord's Supper. In another quarter, lo! the priest at the altar clothed with peculiar authority to consecrate sacramental elements, and to open or shut the channels of grace. We stand midway. We acknowledge an official ministry; but we deny a sacerdotal order. Then as to the efficacy of the rites: one side says that these are merely formal, though clothed with a certain mnemonic value; the other side claims that they are sublime mysteries, indispensable to salvation. Again we stand between the two. For us the sacraments are more than venerable forms, or even mnemonic rites; but, on the other hand, they are not invariable conduits of saving grace. One man thinks Baptism a ceremony: another regards it as regeneration. Both are wrong. It is much more than a ceremony; but then it is only the sign and pledge, not the mystic instrument, of regeneration. The Holy Communion is in the eyes of some a social, fraternal meal: in the eyes of others, the occasion of a dread sacrifice offered at an altar. Again we avoid those extremes. At the table of the Lord, we witness and share an impressive solemnity, a commemoration of the death of Christ, and a communion of His people with Him in faith and love, highly instructive, corroborative, and consolatory to all the members of His spiritual Body.



ARTICLE XXI.

OF THE SECOND ADVENT.

We assuredly believe that on a day known only to God the Lord Jesus Christ will suddenly come again from heaven with power and great glory; and we look for this second appearing of our Saviour as the blessed hope of His Church, for which we ought always to wait in sober watchfulness and diligence, that we may be found ready at His coming.

* "*We assuredly believe.*"—This opening phrase marks the emphasis due to the subject, and the resolute resistance we make to that mocking spirit which cries: "Where is the promise of His coming?" It is admitted that we have no ground for our expectation except the word of prophecy and promise. But this word is explicit enough to warrant assured belief. At all events, it is enough for all who esteem Jesus Christ as faithful and true; and, therefore, as incapable of speaking at random or deluding His followers with vain hope of a return which He was never to accomplish.

Yet, for centuries and in almost all Churches, this truth of the Second Advent, so prominent in the Holy Writings of the

New Testament, has been much neglected, or, when recognised, has been described in the language of terror rather than of hope. The hearts of men have trembled before the solemnities of death and final judgment. Much has been said of the great day of His wrath; but little about His joy and the joy of the Church at His glorious appearing. You may recite creeds, and search the confessions, and read ever so many books of British and continental theology, and yet never gather from them that the Second Advent of Christ is "the blessed hope" of the Church, and that it was this which sustained the patience of apostles and saints in trials and labours for His name, thrilling their hearts with sacred gladness.

The causes for this have been various: chiefly the confusion of thought which identifies the Church of God with the reign of Christ on the earth; the perplexing conception of a saintly millennium, which, if it is to precede the Advent, puts that event out of practical range of thought; and, perhaps most of all, the difficulty of adjusting the order of future events so far as they are disclosed. How long between the resurrection of the just and that of the unjust? When will the saints reign on the earth, and who will be their subjects? When shall they meet Him in the air? And how are we to understand and combine the various testings and judgments by the Lord—the trial of the virgins, the trial of the servants, the judgment of nations, the judgment of the dead, the judgment of the world in righteousness, and the gathering out of those that do iniquity? Now it is perhaps not possible for us to arrange these in our thought exactly as they will come to pass. The best men in Israel did not foresee what would occur at the First Advent of Christ; and it is quite likely that all the maps of futurity drawn by students of Scripture regarding the Second Advent

are full of mistakes. But the Church commits herself to no details regarding the order and succession of events. In these Articles she specifies the chief features of the time of the end, as shown in Scripture—the Second Advent, the Resurrection, the Last Judgment, the Life Everlasting. As to the order of time, and all similar questions, let students of the Bible think for themselves, as it may be revealed to them.

In the present Article we are kept to the main fact, letting side questions alone. As the promise of the Old Testament was that Messiah should come, so the promise of the New Testament is that He will come again. The Lord Jesus Himself gave assurance of it again and again. It was announced to the Galilean disciples, just after the ascension of the Saviour, by “two men in white apparel”. It formed part of the divine message on the lips of men who were moved by the Holy Ghost. It is referred to with earnestness and fervour by St. Peter, St. Paul, St. John, St. James, St. Jude, and the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews. It cannot be disputed that this hope formed an integral and important element of primitive Christianity.

“*On a day known only to God the Lord Jesus Christ will suddenly come again from heaven.*”—He will come in person—“that same Jesus” Whom the disciples saw ascend toward heaven. And He will come suddenly—not to a world prepared, but to a world unprepared, and therefore amazed. In discourse with the disciples Jesus likened His second coming to a flash of lightning, and exhorted them to watchfulness because He would return in an hour when men looked not for Him.

Naturally the disciples were inquisitive about the time of the Advent; and the Lord gave them certain signs of His approach, but added: “Of that day and hour knoweth no one, not even the angels of heaven, neither the Son,

but the Father only" (St. Matt. xxiv. 36). The signs would be of service to watchful souls, so far at least as to show that the event was nigh. But no one should presume to fix an exact date, or make sure of the chronology of Christ's coming to a day or hour.

It was so at the First Advent. The Book of Daniel furnished indications of the appointed time, and pious Jews and Jewesses were in a mood of devout expectation as the eve drew nigh; but even these could not fix the day: and the people at large, with their teachers and rulers, though they possessed the Scriptures of the Prophets, were quite unprepared for Messiah the Prince. He came suddenly and in an hour that they knew not. After the same manner of suddenness, but not of obscurity, He will come again.

"With power and great glory."—The First Advent was in great humility. A few shepherds at Bethlehem received an angelic announcement of the Lord's nativity, but the nation was unaware of it, and the world was all ignorant and unmoved. The Second Advent is to be quite otherwise. It will not only be possible for all nations to behold Him, but it will be impossible for any not to know that He has come. The words of our Article, as above quoted, are those of our Blessed Lord: "All tribes of the earth shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (St. Matt. xxiv. 30).

What these words may cover of surpassing grandeur must be left unsaid. But it may be well to note how much they are at variance with the theory entertained by some of a coming of Christ for His waiting saints, unseen by others, anterior to His visible Advent. There is to be only a Second Advent, not a third, and it is to be splendidly conspicuous. Every eye shall see Him.

We have often heard it said that Christ comes to every man at his death; but even if this be true, it is certainly not the blessed hope of our dispensation; it is not the Second Advent. We have also been told that Christ may be said to come in an augmentation of spiritual power to His Church: but surely the presence of Christ in the Church, His omnipresence or everywhere-ness, is the blessing of this current dispensation. Whatever be the spiritual energy exerted by Him, it belongs to the present age. This is never confounded in Scripture with our Lord's *parousia* or appearing. The spiritual dynamic presence of Jesus Christ continues till the day when He is to appear in His glory, and take His great power and reign.

"And we look for this second appearing of our Saviour as the blessed hope of His Church."—Because the Church loves her Lord, she is joyful in the hope of an event which will be a glorious reversal of the rejection and contumely which He endured in the days of His flesh. The once-despised Jesus comes in overwhelming majesty. We shall see all things put under Him. He Who was forsaken and slain for us will be glorified before all, and crowned with many crowns. Therefore, when He says: "I am the bright and morning Star," the Spirit moves the Bride to answer: "Come! and let him that heareth, say, Come!"

The Church also hails the era which will wind up her struggling and militant age with triumph. All defect will then be made good; holy longings will be satisfied; and the whole Church presented unblamable in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with His saints.

O blessed day! when wilt thou dawn! The feeling which finds expression in such language is obviously quite

different from that which is excited by the approach of death. There is no promise of death; nor is it an object of hope: whereas the coming of Christ is a promise and kindles a "blessed hope". If death be near, we submit to the Lord's will. If the Advent be near, we do not submit, we leap for joy.

"For which we ought always to wait in sober watchfulness and diligence."—So our Lord taught the disciples both in plain sayings and in parables. So the apostles exhorted their fellow-Christians. Though the Westminster Confession, and the Puritan theology which it condenses with such ability, paid insufficient attention to this theme, it concludes with these well-chosen words: "Christ will have that day unknown to men, that they may shake off all carnal security, and be always watchful, because they know not at what hour the Lord will come; and may be ever prepared to say: 'Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly. Amen.'"

This seems to us decisive against the notion that Evangelical Christianity is first to fill the earth, and to predominate for a thousand years before the coming of the Lord. One may wait for an event which may occur at any day or hour, but how can one pretend to watch for an event which cannot come to pass till the end of a period of a thousand years—which period has not yet begun?

It is a mistake to complicate the great promise of the Second Advent with anticipation of a millennium of love and peace, either before or after. The former is very clear in Holy Writ, and rests on scores of important passages. The latter is obscure, and far from having any prominence in the Bible, has little to rest upon but the vision in Revelation, chap. xx. The former is a great doctrine of the Christian faith, to which we devote an entire Article. The latter is a subject on which we lay nothing down dogmatically, and on

which students of the Bible may hold divergent opinions without blame to themselves or injury to the Church.

The thing required is to keep thought and hope fixed on the return of the Master of the house; the King Who has gone to a far country and will come back; the Bridegroom of the Church—"Go ye out to meet Him!"

Such expectation calls for "*sober watchfulness*". Extravagant ambition, riotous living, heady wills, and indulged passions should not be found in those who wait for their Lord. Watch and be sober. Watch and pray.

It also calls for "*diligence*" in His service. Hide not His money in a napkin under ground. Miss not the opportunities which open to you for speaking truth, showing kindness, or doing good. He has assigned to every man his work. Blessed is that wise servant whom the Lord, when He comes, shall find so doing!

"*That we may be found ready at His coming.*"—Not ashamed before Him. And He not ashamed of us. Our loins girt about, and our lamps burning—ready to go in with Him to the marriage!



ARTICLE XXII.

OF THE RESURRECTION.

We believe that the souls of the righteous enter at death upon a state of rest and felicity at home with the Lord; that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and of the unjust, through the power of the Son of God; and that the bodies of all who are fallen asleep in Christ, as well as of the faithful who are alive at His coming, shall be fashioned anew and conformed to the body of His glory.

THIS statement is brief, and couched in guarded terms. For this no apology is due. The topic is one which ought to be handled with the greatest circumspection. It is one of those themes on which our little knowledge should be expressed with a proper sense of our vast ignorance.

I. THE SEPARATE STATE.

By this is meant the condition of human souls after death in separation from their bodies. It is a topic on which the Reformed Confessions are not satisfactory. The compilers of those documents were so intent on disowning the Roman doctrine of Purgatory, that they did not care to look very closely into the distinction between the pre-resurrection and

post-resurrection states. The Thirty-nine Articles make no mention of the death or resurrection of men, but amends for this are made by the Order for the Burial of the Dead, which not only affirms the resurrection of life, but makes beautiful reference to the bliss of the separate state in the words—“Almighty God, with Whom do live the spirits of them that depart hence in the Lord, and with Whom the souls of the faithful, after they are delivered from the burden of the flesh, are in joy and felicity”. The Westminster Confession devotes a paragraph to “the state of men after death”. Unfortunately it asserts more than can be proved. It affirms that the souls of all men “have an immortal subsistence,” which has been maintained as a philosophical tenet, but cannot be found in Holy Writ. It then proceeds to say that immediately after death souls are either “received into the highest heavens,” or “cast into hell, where they remain in torments and utter darkness”. Obviously this would anticipate the judgment of the last day, and would seem to render it superfluous.

All this our present Article lets alone, contenting itself with a statement of what the New Testament has disclosed regarding the souls of the righteous dead. “*We believe that the souls of the righteous enter at death upon a state of rest and felicity at home with the Lord*” (2 Cor. v. 8, Rev. Vers.). Though we say nothing of “an immortal subsistence,” we believe that human souls live on, though their bodies die and are dissolved. How the disembodiment affects their powers of activity no one can tell; but they are not in mere stupor or unconsciousness. The souls of the wicked can have no rest; the souls of the righteous have “rest and felicity” in the presence of Christ. St. Paul considered such a condition to be “far better” than the most useful life in a mortal body. For followers of Christ, “to die is gain”.

We have nothing to say here about wings, harps, or crowns. There is no reason to think that human bodies ever had or will have wings, and to speak of souls wearing wings and playing on harps is too absurd. Crowns there may be, but not till after the resurrection. All through the literature of this subject, especially in poetry, confusion has been wrought through a habit of assigning to the separate state immediately after death those rewards of service and conditions of elevated bliss which properly follow the resurrection from the dead. Thus we have seen that the Westminster divines affirmed the instant reception of saved souls at death "into the highest heavens". They could not, however, fail to know that many Christians are called away in a condition of unfitness for highest heaven and for communion in glory with Christ and with the saints. Accordingly they introduced another assertion that these souls are "at death made perfect in holiness". Their only authority for this is the phrase: "The spirits of just men made perfect," in Heb. xii. 23, which is no proof at all.*

All such assumptions have been so many weights gratuitously attached to the New Testament doctrine on this subject, tending to drown it in the waters of surmise and uncertainty. And they overlook the important connection between the coming of Christ and His reception of the saints into His glory. They that have fallen asleep in Jesus are not in glory yet, but are waiting for glory.

II. RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD.

Resurrection from the dead, or of the dead, is the language of the New Testament. So also the Nicene Creed: "I look for the resurrection of the dead". The

* The reference in this text is to those who were just by faith under the Old Testament, who are now perfected by Christ's offering of Himself, and "not without us".—See Heb. x. 14, xi. 40.

oldest form of the (so-called) Apostles' Creed has "resurrection of the flesh"; and this unfortunately has been retained in the Anglican Baptismal Services, and the Order for Visitation of the Sick, though not in the Catechism, nor in the Order for Morning and Evening Prayer. In modern use of the Creed we say "resurrection of the body," and this is supported by at least one passage of Holy Writ: "He that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead shall quicken also your mortal bodies through His Spirit That dwelleth in you" (Rom. viii. 11). At the same time it should be observed that this text, and the famous discussion of the question: "With what manner of body do they rise?" in 1 Cor. xv., relate to those only who are "the dead in Christ". Here again the Westminster Confession is unsatisfactory. It overlooks the restriction which we have just pointed out, and thus ventures on two affirmations of a much more sweeping character than the Scriptures warrant: (1) That "at the last day such as are found alive shall not die, but be changed". The proof-text given for this is 1 Thess. iv. 17, which bears on the transfiguration of those who are Christ's, and of none else. (2) That all the dead shall be raised up with the self-same bodies, and none other, "although with different qualities". For this two proofs are adduced, which say nothing whatever about "all the dead". In fact the Bible is absolutely silent about the resurrection bodies of those who in their lifetime were not Christ's.

Endeavouring to avoid mere assumptions on a subject of which we can know nothing but from revelation, we declare our belief in a resurrection of the dead, but confine our statement regarding the bodies in which men will be raised to the case of those "who are fallen asleep in Christ". Their bodies are to be "conformed to the body of His glory". Into the same likeness will also be

transfigured all the faithful who may be found alive on the earth at His coming.

“There will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and of the unjust, through the power of the Son of God.”—Such is the doctrine stated at large, and on the clearest authority. The very language is taken from St. Paul’s speech to the governor Felix (Acts xxiv. 15). And the affirmation rests on the quite decisive saying of our Lord : “All that are in the tombs shall hear His voice, and shall come forth ; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life ; and they that have done ill, unto the resurrection of judgment ” (St. John v. 28, 29).

In other parts of Scripture, the resurrection of the just has special emphasis, and, indeed, almost exclusive recognition. How long it may precede the resurrection of the unjust we cannot tell. It is a point on which the Church has no need to commit herself to a definite opinion. But we avoid the somewhat misleading phrase, “general resurrection,” because it may suggest a simultaneous re-appearance. Now, the well-doers and the ill-doers are not to rise simultaneously. “The dead in Christ shall rise first.” And while all are to be raised by “the power of the Son of God,” the principle of the resurrection in each case is different. Those who are Christ’s will be raised up in union with Him in that harvest of which His own resurrection was the first fruits : whereas such as are not His, but have wrought iniquity, will be raised simply by His power, in order to be judged.

“And the bodies of all who are fallen asleep in Christ, as well as of the faithful who are alive at His coming, shall be fashioned anew, and conformed to the body of His glory.”—Here we are on sure ground of Scripture, and have special reference to the language of St. Paul in Phil. iii. 21.

We are at once confronted with the difficulty of the conception that a body which has been resolved into its elements—which elements have passed into other shapes and combinations over and over again—can be restored. The physicist declares such a thing impossible; and it may be admitted that the objection raised is fatal to any theory of the resurrection of the self-same flesh. But the Bible is committed to no such theory. On the contrary, the Apostle Paul, handling this very point, explains that the body in the resurrection of the just will not be the self-same flesh that died, but something that will emanate from it, as a plant issues from a seed that has died in the ground. The form and substance of the plant are derived from the elements, and so moulded on a type as to suit the place appointed to it in the vegetable kingdom. So the bodies in the resurrection will be taken in substance from the elements and moulded on a type so as to suit their places in the future inheritance of saints.

But how then will the body be the same? Have we not quoted the Scripture that God will “quicken our mortal bodies”? Now, we should like to ask him who puts this question, to tell us wherein physical sameness consists. In the present state of being, our bodies are constantly undergoing change. Any man will say that he has the same body as he had twenty years ago, though older; and yet there is not a particle of the same flesh and blood remaining. After long years, one returns to a well-remembered spot, and recognises the old familiar trees. They are the same as ever, and yet they are substantially changed. Or one looks at a river—always the same—and yet there is not a drop of water in it to-day that was in it last week. So there may be a continuous identity, along with a constant change or flux.

We have disowned the term “self-same flesh”. No

object is gained by pressing the point of identity so far. What the Scripture insists upon is the difference between the "psychical" body of our present state, and the "pneumatical" body in the resurrection. The psychical body is mortal and corruptible. It takes its form and bearing from our ancestors, our food, our habits and employments, and, in some measure, from our inward disposition. The mind moulds the body as well as the body the mind. The pneumatical body will be immortal and incorrupt; material, we must suppose, in its substance, but free from fault and feebleness, free also from heaviness, grossness, and liability to disease—so constituted as to be the habitation and the index of a pure and happy spirit. Such bodies the angels may possibly have. But the model on which the future bodies of the saints will be fashioned is not the angelic frame, but the body of the Lord Jesus in His glory, "the image of the heavenly". So the corruptible is to put on incorruption, and the mortal immortality.

The difficulties which attend this subject have induced some Christians to treat it with great reserve, and to dwell rather on the immortality of the soul. But our religion has no reason to hide its doctrine of the redemption of the body. On the contrary, this is one of its points of superiority to other religions, and to all philosophic morality. The Bishop of Durham has said in his volume on "The Gospel of the Resurrection": "The noblest of the ancient moralists looked upon man's body as a hopeless burden and fatal hindrance to the soul: and in this they have been followed by the noblest non-Christian moralists in every age. But Christianity transfigures what philosophy would destroy. It shows that the corruption by which we are weighed down does not belong to our proper nature, and is not necessarily bound up with it for ever." He points out the immense

chasm which divides the thought of the apostles on this topic from that of Platonists and Stoics—"the change for which St. Paul hoped was not the destruction but the ennobling of his body, by being fashioned like unto Christ's body of glory".*

Our Christian doctrine, at this, as at all other points, has a distinct moral significance and tendency. "The body is for the Lord, and the Lord for the body." There is, therefore, a solemn obligation to keep it pure, not to hurt it either by excesses or by austerities, and not to yield its members as instruments of unrighteousness. "Glorify God, therefore, in your body."

This doctrine, too, is rich in comfort. Without it what could we say when we have to lay the bodies of our Christian friends in the grave? Pathetic meditations on death, even though mingled with some eulogy of the departed, would still leave us comfortless. But all is brightened by this flash of promise: "Thy brother shall rise again"! The resurrection is worth waiting for, since it is the victory won at last over death and the grave, the unlocking of the gates of hades, the reversal of the sentence: "In Adam all die". Thus in Christ are all made alive. "When this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory."

* Fifth ed., pp. 179-180.



ARTICLE XXIII.

OF THE LAST JUDGMENT.

We believe that God will judge the world in righteousness by Jesus Christ, before Whom all men must appear, Who shall separate the righteous from the wicked, make manifest the secrets of the heart, and render to every man according to the deeds which he hath done in the body, whether good or evil, when the wicked shall go away into eternal punishment but the righteous into eternal life.

THE doctrine of judgment to come is so serious in itself, and so emphatically stated in Holy Writ, that it cannot be omitted from any, even the most compendious enumeration of the chief matters in religion.

The title "Last Judgment" suggests, and with truth, that there are many previous judgments. God calls individuals, churches, and nations to account when and how He pleases. He tried and judged our first parents when they had sinned. He judged Cain for the murder of his brother. He judged the corrupt antediluvian world, and executed judgment also. So has it been all through history. It is marked by critical events and epochs, because there is a God Who judges in

the earth. But all these point forward to a final and conclusive judgment which is to wind up the whole drama of world history, and to determine and close the long strife between good and evil.

Two convictions must be held to underlie our belief in the Last Judgment. (1) That recompense and retribution are worthy to have place in the divine government. They have their part to play in the moral system of the universe. (2) A dualism of good and evil, balancing and opposing each other, is not to be the permanent condition of things. Good is destined to ultimate triumph: evil is doomed to condign and ignominious defeat.

Our Article does not speak of the Day of Judgment, though such an expression may be found among the sayings of our Lord, and also in St. Paul's address at Athens. Probably the omission is intentional, and, if so, it is not unwise. It is of some importance to draw off the popular mind from the idea of a day, such as we know it, and a supreme court sitting for a day, with human beings drawn hither by angels or dragged thither by fiends, as the old painters put it all on canvas, notably Michael Angelo in the great fresco at the Sistine Chapel of the Vatican. How long, how short, that great "day of the Lord" may be, no tongue can tell. The points of importance are: (1) that the day or era is appointed, and (2) that the judgment at that era will conclude in a righteous manner the long term of moral conflict on the earth, the period of the Lord's long-suffering and of the patience of the saints.

Many preachers have treated this theme with animated and minatory rhetoric. John Wesley, for instance, in his sermon on "The Great Assize," abounds in interjections and apostrophes. The subject easily yields itself to such treatment. But for our didactic purpose, it is necessary

to avoid sensational description and think calmly and cautiously.

I. THINGS NOT QUITE CLEAR.

No man need be ashamed to say that about some circumstances and aspects of the final judgment he feels uncertain. Who is able to arrange definitely in his mind the various parts or stages of the judgment as indicated in the New Testament? Our Lord gave notice that at His return He will call His servants to account on the point of fidelity to their unseen Master. This does not touch the great world of men. But He also described a judgment of all nations as to whether they had or had not shown kindness to the least of His brethren. Then, if we inquire of the apostles, we find St. Paul proclaiming that our risen Lord will judge the world on an appointed day. Both St. Peter and St. Paul say that He will "judge the quick and the dead". St. John had a sublime vision of the judgment of "the dead" according to their works. All these sayings must be true; but whether these judgments are synchronous or follow each other at intervals over a day of the Lord, which may be a thousand years, it baffles us to determine. It is a mistake to confound them together or roll them into one without distinction; and on the other hand it may be a mistake to separate them over much, as they probably do who talk of three sessions of judgment to come. Let us be content to recognise that there are various aspects of divine judgment hereafter and various tests in judgment. Every one shall give account of himself to God according to the position he has filled and the advantages he has enjoyed, professed Christians, servants of Christ, being ranked as faithful or unfaithful, and men at large as they have done good or done evil.

II. THINGS CLEAR AND INDUBITABLE.

(1) *The Lord Jesus Christ will be the Judge.*—For this we have His own authority and that of His apostles—St. Matt. xxv. 31; St. John v. 22, 27; Acts x. 42, xvii. 31; 2 Cor. v. 10; 2 Tim. iv. 1.

At His coming the Lord will judge His servants because He is their Master, and all that they have had to profit withal in their time of service has been entrusted to them by Him. So is it laid down in His parables of the talents and of the pounds. No one but the Christ can fully and finally judge a Christian.

He will also judge the world, because the Father has appointed Him to this function. The office is suitable to Him as being the "Son of Man," and therefore able through His human consciousness to sift the characters and lives of men. And it is due to Him as part of the reward of His humiliation. He Who for our sakes submitted to the high priest's unjust tribunal and stood before Pontius Pilate's judgment-seat is fitly recompensed by being seated on a glorious high throne, and having all nations summoned before Him.

(2) *All men will be judged.*—"Before Whom all men shall appear."—Whatever limitations may attach to the words "His servants," or "the dead," or "the Twelve Tribes of Israel," nothing less than universality can be found in the phrases "judge the world," "judge the quick and dead".

(3) *The Judgment will proceed on absolute and infallible knowledge.*—It is indisputable among those who believe in God, that to Him all hearts are open, and from Him no secrets are hid. The accumulation of knowledge so detailed in regard to untold millions of human beings is obviously possible only to an infinite mind. God is infinite: so it is

possible to Him, and therefore to Christ also. He will administer justice and judgment accordingly.

True, that in the great judgment scene of St. Matthew, xxv., the Judge is represented as exchanging questions and answers with masses of men ranged on either hand: but the Bible nowhere indicates an interrogation of individuals on that day; nor indeed is such a detailed process conceivable. The books will be opened: *i.e.*, there will be a disclosure of the true character of each, a revealing of secrets, and a declaration, so far as may be necessary for the ends of public justice, of the estimate, and probably of some of the grounds of the estimate, which the righteous Judge has formed of each and every man. "*Who shall make manifest the secrets of the heart, and render to every man according to the deeds which he has done in the body, whether good or evil.*"

(4) *The whole multitude of those that are judged will fall into two general classes.*—He "*shall separate the righteous from the wicked*". Within these classes may be great diversities; but between them runs a definite and deep line of demarcation. The righteous shall be on His right hand, and the wicked on His left.

In the judgment of each and every one, account will be taken of the advantage and opportunity given to him for knowing and doing right. This bears on the question of responsibility. It does not appear that any question about orthodox opinion or evangelical faith will arise. Unbelief is a sin, but it is a sin that can be imputed only to those who have heard the Gospel. "How shall they believe on Him of Whom they have not heard?" The great dilemma in the Last Judgment is that of good or evil, as done in this mortal life. Believers, having been called to the service of Christ, are to be reckoned with as to their vigilance and diligence during the time spent in the body, their use of the talents

entrusted to them, their work of faith and labour of love. Besides these, all men, having conscience, or a law written on their hearts, will be judged by their doings. So St. Paul describes "the righteous judgment of God, Who will render to every man according to his works".

(5) *The issues of the Judgment will be in life and death, these terms covering all measures of bliss and of shame.*—There will be nothing capricious in the sentence pronounced. On the contrary, a law of moral continuity will carry forward the past into the future. What a man has prepared himself for, he shall have. Whatsoever a man has sown, the same shall he reap. They who have truly lived, because Christ has lived in them, will live on and on with the Lord. They who have shunned and departed from God in this world will be driven from Christ in the last day. At the same time, the future destiny is not a mere outgrowth from the present life. It is an appointment by the righteous Judge, the sign of His approval, or the doom from His disapproval. Each sentence will illustrate the great law of retribution, which appears so much in the Bible and in the whole course of history.

As to the judicial determinations, our Article simply quotes the words of our Lord in St. Matt. xxv.: "*The wicked shall go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life*". Many questions have been started, and many theories confidently broached, on the import of these contrasted phrases; but the Church should not be committed to any of these. On no subject is confident theorising more unseemly or unwise.

Every one sees that the same adjective is applied to future punishment, as to future life. It is "æonial"; if one may coin an equivalent in English—age-ical. It is eviternal, or eternal. The Westminster Confession goes beyond the

Scripture in asserting that the wicked are "cast into eternal torments".* What may be comprehended in the punishment to which the wicked are to be condemned no mortal mind can know or tongue describe. But we are quite sure that the punishment will be such as it is worthy of God to inflict. An earthly government is rightly held responsible for the penalties to which criminals are doomed. If these are excessive or gratuitously cruel, or if the gaols are places of torture, the government is denounced as barbarous. We can never believe that the government of the good and holy God errs on the side of ruthless severity. But here we leave the question of punishment—vague and dreadful. Of the contrary destiny, the eternal life into which the blessed shall pass after the judgment, the twenty-fourth Article will try to speak.

The American divine, Jonathan Edwards, preached and published a sermon on the "Final Judgment," very forcible, and even terrible of its kind. We should never think of quoting its minute descriptions of the lost in unending suffering; but we value the practical conclusion. Those who live in secret wickedness are warned that all secrets will be revealed; and those who "are not just and upright in their dealings with their fellow-men" are admonished that their actions will be tried by a Judge Whom no one can deceive. Sinners are exhorted not to trust to vain excuses. Christians are charged to judge themselves and "not be forward to judge others".

An earlier and greater theologian has spoken of "boldness in the day of judgment" (1 John iv. 17). There is a fear of

* The only kind of support for this is Rev. xiv. 9-11. But (1) No dogma may be founded on a vision in a book full of symbols. (2) The tormented ones in the vision are not by any means all the wicked or all the evil-doers.

judgment to come which has torment : but perfect love casts out such fear. Now this love is awakened by a persuasion of the love of God to us, and is perfected in communion with Him Who is Love. In the mutual abiding and spiritual familiarity of the loving God and the loving human heart, the power of love is so increased as to give boldness or freedom of spirit, even in face of the righteous judgment. "Now, little children, abide in Christ, that when He shall appear we may have boldness, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming."



ARTICLE XXIV.

OF THE LIFE EVERLASTING.

Finally, we believe in and desire the life everlasting in which the redeemed shall receive their inheritance of glory in the kingdom of their Father, and be made fully blessed in the presence and service of God, Whom they shall see and enjoy for ever and ever. Amen.

EASTERN religions had the dim hope of some ultimate abode of peace and mystic stillness. The Greeks and Romans thought the dead happy who dwelt as ghosts in isles of the blessed or in Elysian fields. The Koran promises to the faithful just such a Paradise as an Arab would naturally desire—shade, water, fruit, rest, companionship on couches lined with thick silk, green cushions, and beautiful carpets.

Our holy religion has a far higher conception of future blessedness. There is nothing trivial or merely sensuous in its hope of glory, nor is any overweening value attached to ageless repose. Read such Scriptures as Psalms xvii. 15; St. Matt. xiii. 43; Rev. xxi. 24-27, xxii. 3-5. What dignity in these promises! What an answer to the best aspiration of the souls that love God!

"*We believe in and desire the life everlasting.*"—So our Articles end like the Apostles' Creed ; but the word "desire" is added to the declaration of faith to intimate that the Christian heart is set on that life in glory, and to harmonise with the Nicene Creed, which says : "I look for (*expecto*) the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world (age) to come".

This is far more than the expectation of an interminable continuous existence. It is a fulness of life, the exercise of its noblest capacities, and the conscious enjoyment of the ever-living God in a sweet and blessed home. We cannot really get much meaning out of such words as eternal and everlasting. Do what we will, we find ourselves thinking of a very protracted duration, whereas, eternity, properly considered, should obliterate the very notion of the succession and extension of time. The "life of the age to come" is a good phrase as suggesting the contrast between the future life and that of the age which now is. It will not be transient, but abiding ; not threatened with peril, but secure ; not agitated by conflict, difficulty, or sorrow, but sustained in holy tranquillity.

The Larger Catechism has an impressive statement regarding the condition of the righteous after resurrection and judgment : "They shall be fully and for ever freed from all sin and misery, filled with inconceivable joys, made perfectly holy and happy, both in body and soul, in the company of innumerable saints and holy angels, but especially in the immediate vision and fruition of God the Father, of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit, to all eternity". Our Article asserts two things of them who shall be adjudged to life everlasting. They are to be glorified, and they are to be beatified.

(1) Glorified.--"*The redeemed shall receive their inheri-*

tance of glory in the kingdom of their Father.”—The foundation for this statement may be found in St. Matt. xiii. 43, xxv. 34; 1 Peter i. 4.

The suggestion is not of safety and repose merely but of a heavenly radiance. It is manifestation with Christ in the glory given to Him. Not that the saints are to find their chief joy in an environment of dazzling splendour. The thought of a perpetual conspicuousness has no charm for humble or modest souls, and never can be their heavenly recompense. What will satisfy a saint will be to dwell in the presence of the King of saints, to behold the Saviour's glory, and to be with the good and the wise of all generations without fault before His throne.

The glory of the saints may be regarded as the triumphant reversal of “the sufferings of this present time,” and of the obloquy which many of them have endured for the name of Jesus. It may also be regarded as the issue and crown of grace. Grace reigns through righteousness; and they who have received grace, and fulfilled righteousness, at last inherit glory. We read in Psalm lxxxiv. 11, “The Lord will give grace and glory”. Both are referred to His purpose and gift of love; and it is safe to say: if grace, then glory; and, the more grace, the more glory. St. Paul also teaches that those who are justified by faith stand in grace and may rejoice in hope of the glory of God (Rom. v. 1, 2).

Robert Hall, a great sufferer in the body, very naturally said that his chief conception of heaven was rest. William Wilberforce, the Christian philanthropist, replied that his chief conception was love. Both were right in their way. These blessings and many more will be found in perfection in the state of glory. We speak as children—we think as children. We have only faint glimpses of what a good

old writer * calls "the inaccessible light, the cherishing love, the daunting majesty, the infinite purity, the overloading joy, the insupportable glory ; and more, the glances and smiles of God upon the heavenly host who for ever warm and sun themselves in His presence". We can but sing with wonder the refrain of the children's hymn : "Glory, glory, glory !"

(2) Beatified.—"*The redeemed shall be made fully blessed in the presence and service of God, Whom they shall see and enjoy for ever and ever.*"—The insertion of the word "fully" is intended to remind us that the redeemed are blessed in this present time with the pardon of sin, the favour of God, and the consolation of the Holy Spirit, and that they will be blessed yet more in the waiting time between death and resurrection. The consummation follows the judgment. And as the blessedness of the present imperfect state is found in looking to God and rendering to Him a willing service, so will the fulness of beatitude be found in more steadfast contemplation and more devoted service.

a. The Beatific Vision.—We affirm that the redeemed shall be "in the presence of God," and "shall see and enjoy Him for ever". Many are desirous to know whether the blessed ones in heaven recognise one another, and renew the attachments and friendships of their years of earthly pilgrimage ; most probably it will be so, but the absorbing sight in heaven will be the face of God, and our Article mentions no other.

One of the finest productions of the Puritan theology is John Howe's treatise on "The Blessedness of the Righteous". It was first published with a prefatory note of commendation by Richard Baxter, who wrote of "The Saint's Everlasting Rest"—a happy conjunction. Howe places the blessedness

* Bp. Hopkins.

of the righteous in three things: vision of the face of God, assimilation thereto, and satisfaction therein.

On the vision itself, and on the question whether it is with the senses of the glorified body, or with the mind only, who can speak? John Howe writes with reverence: "Glory seems to carry in it a peculiar respect to the visive power; 'tis something to be contemplated—to be looked upon". Then he describes the sight of God and His glory by the saints in heaven as most properly, though not exclusively, "an immediate intuition of the lustre and loveliness of His presence".

On this follows—from this results—assimilation to God. "Surely it is of equal necessity to the saint's blessedness to partake the glory of God as to behold it, as well to have the divine likeness impressed as have it represented." Our author proceeds to show what things in God are incommunicable and what are communicable, and that it is an assimilation to God in His moral excellencies that forms a great element in the bliss of the saints.

The third point is the satisfaction which accrues. "I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness" (Psalms xvii. 15). What a word is this: "I shall be satisfied!" Meditating on God's loving-kindness in his time, the royal poet of Israel described his soul as "filled with marrow and fatness". But meditation on God is interrupted here, and the soul's satisfaction is invaded and broken. It can only be in the beatific vision of God in heaven, and the conformity to God which ensues, that a deep and durable satisfaction can be realised—a perfect rest—a sweet fruition of the highest good.

b. The Higher Service.—It is the Lord's servants who shall see His face, standing before Him in readiness to do His will. The angels behold our Father's face, and they

serve Him and His children. The children too, when they behold His face in righteousness, will joyfully give themselves to any duty or function that He may appoint. So will they be "fully blessed in the service of God".

Granted that this is matter of inference rather than of knowledge. No one pretends to say what occupations may open to the happy saints, or what behests they may be sent to execute in distant parts of the universe; but we infer from the nature of man, and from the nature of love in God and man, that the blessed ones will have exercise for their active as well as receptive powers, and will be no mere absorbants but also reflectors and propagators of light and joy. What delightful service it will be, without reluctance, without mistake, without weariness, without any envy, confusion, or contention among the workers; service rendered with the understanding full of light, the heart full of love, and the will free from all perversity and obstinacy, attuned unerringly to the good and holy will of God!

With such thoughts our Articles of the Faith fitly end. They begin and end with God. All through the series we show how God is with men on the earth; and we conclude by showing how men are to be with God in heaven. Man's chief end, lost by sin, recovered by grace, and preserved through the life of faith, is at last reached in the life to come—glorifying God and enjoying Him for ever.

AMEN.



APPENDIX TO THE ARTICLES OF THE FAITH.

CHAPTER I.

CHURCH POLITY.

1. The only Head of the Church is the Lord Jesus Christ, from Whom its powers and prerogatives are derived, so that all its functions are to be exercised in His name, under the guidance of His Word and Spirit, and in subjection to His authority alone.

2. The Lord Jesus Christ hath given to the Church the Ministry, the Word, and the Sacraments, for the perfecting of the Saints, and the increase of the Kingdom of God.

3. In accordance with the practice of the Apostolic age, the affairs of the Church are stately administered by Officers chosen by the members, and solemnly set apart to their offices.

4. Of such Officers there are two orders only, recog-

nised in the New Testament as Presbyters (*i.e.*, Elders) or Bishops, and Deacons.

5. The spiritual oversight of each Congregation is vested in its Presbyters, who sit in council, presided over by the Presbyter who is set apart, as a minister of the Word of God, to teach, and to preach the Gospel.

6. The function of Deacons is to take part in the care of the poor, and in the management of the funds and property of the Congregation. Where there are no Deacons, the financial affairs are administered by a Committee of Management.

7. Congregations, while organised for the orderly administration of their own affairs, are not separate Churches, independent of each other, but are integral portions of one and the same Church, having a common doctrine, and being subject to a common government.

8. Common Government is exercised by Ministers and representative Elders from Congregations within a given area, who form a "Presbytery". Presbyteries are in their turn subject to a Synod or Assembly, also consisting of Ministers and Elders, representing the whole Church.

9. The objects sought by this system of administration are the manifestation of the unity of the Church, the maintenance of a united testimony to the truth, mutual counsel and support, the faithful exercise of discipline, and combined effort in furtherance of those ends for which the Church of Christ exists.

CHAPTER II.

THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE CHURCH.

1. As those who are united to the Lord Jesus Christ by faith belong to the Church Invisible, all who make credible profession of such faith are to be received into the communion of the Visible Church.

2. The children of those who are in communion belong to the Visible Church, and are to be baptised. Adults are required to profess their faith in Christ previous to baptism. Those who have been baptised into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost may not be re-baptised.

3. Baptised children are not regarded as in the full communion of the Church; but they receive her nurturing care until they are of age to make intelligent profession of their faith in Christ and their obedience to Him: on making which profession they are to be admitted to the table of the Lord, and the full privileges of membership.

4. The members of the Church, being united to one another in love, are bound to maintain fellowship in the public worship of God, to seek the spiritual profit of one another, to bear each other's burdens, and to combine for the support and extension of the Kingdom of God.

5. A member in full communion, on leaving a Congregation, is entitled to a certificate of membership, on presentation of which in due time he is received to the same standing in any other Congregation of the Church.

CHAPTER III.

THE DISCIPLINE OF THE CHURCH.

1. The members of the Church are subject to its government, and amenable to its discipline.

2. Church power, being for the edifying of the body of Christ, is in its nature wholly spiritual; so that, as the Church may not admit within its own sphere the interference or control of the civil power, so neither may it intermeddle with civil rights or attempt the infliction of civil penalties.

3. Church discipline is the exercise of spiritual authority in a brotherly spirit for the reclaiming of offending brethren, for deterring others from the commission of offences, and for vindicating the honour of Christ and the purity of His Church.

4. The Censures by which it is sought to attain these ends are admonition, rebuke, suspension from the privileges of the Church for a season, and in the last resort excommunication.

5. The rights of individuals are protected against the abuse of Church authority, by rules laid down for its exercise, and by a power of appeal from local to more general assemblies.

CHAPTER IV.

WORSHIP AND THE LORD'S DAY.

1. Religious worship is to be offered to God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, and to Him alone.

2. Worship is acceptable to God through the mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ, and of Him only ; and is to be offered by us in His name, in reliance on the promised aid of His Spirit.

3. In New Testament times the worship of God does not depend for its acceptance on the place where it is presented, or towards which it is directed, but is well-pleasing to Him wherever it is rendered according to His will in spirit and in truth : wherefore God is to be worshipped everywhere ; as in secret and in families, so also in the solemn public assemblies of His people.

4. Public worship is to be regulated according to the simplicity of the New Testament, and conducted with due order and reverence, in a known tongue and without burdensome ceremonial.

5. The ordinary public worship of God comprises common prayer, the singing of God's praises, the reading of Holy Scripture, the preaching and hearing of the Word, and the offering of our substance for the service of God, with the due administration at fitting times of the sacraments instituted by Christ.

6. The public worship of God is especially to be celebrated on one day in seven, set apart by God from the beginning as a day of rest and gladness to be kept holy unto Himself. After the example of our Lord and His Apostles, the first day of the week is to be thus observed throughout the Church Universal as the Lord's Day, in memory of our Saviour's resurrection.

7. Whatever respect some may pay to other days of commemoration, yet do these lack Scriptural authority, and may not be enforced as binding on the Christian conscience.

CHAPTER V.

MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE.

1. Marriage is to be held in honour, having been ordained of God in the time of man's innocence, as the foundation and bond of family life; and is to be between one man and one woman only.

2. Although marriage is not a sacrament of the Church, but an ordinance appointed for the human race, yet Christians should marry only in the Lord, and it is seemly and right that they be joined in marriage by a minister of His Word.

3. Christians may lawfully abstain from marriage; but the imposition of vows of perpetual celibacy or virginity is to be rejected, as a disparagement of God's ordinance and an invasion of Christian liberty; and such vows of perpetual celibacy or virginity, voluntarily taken, so far from being degrees of perfection or badges of sanctity, are a snare in which Christians ought not to entangle themselves.

4. Marriage ought not to be within the degrees of relationship forbidden in Holy Writ.

5. In the case of adultery, it is lawful for the innocent party to sue out a divorce ; and after the divorce has been pronounced by a Public Court of Justice, to marry another as if the offending party were dead.

CHAPTER VI.

CIVIL GOVERNMENT.

1. God, the Supreme Lord and Ruler of the nations, has instituted Civil Government, to be under Him, for the making and executing of laws, with a view to the preservation, good order, and welfare of society ; and to this end He has armed rulers and magistrates with the power of the sword, for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the defence and encouragement of those who do well.

2. It is the duty of the State, acting within its own province, to seek through legislation and government the common good of its subjects, and to exert the legitimate influence of the nation in favour of righteousness and peace throughout the world.

3. That Christians have a citizenship in Heaven does in no wise relieve them from the obligations of citizenship in the State, or preclude them from accepting civil office, when regularly called or appointed thereunto. In the discharge of all their duties as citizens, Christians are subject to the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ.

4. The Civil Power may not assume to itself spiritual or ecclesiastical jurisdiction ; but should respect and protect the Church of Christ in the due exercise of its worship and administration of its affairs.

5. God alone is Lord of the conscience ; so that, in all matters in which He has revealed His will, every man is bound to render obedience to Him : wherefore any attempt on the part of the State to constrain the religious belief of its subjects, or to impose on them forms of worship, is an invasion of the rights of conscience.

6. It is the duty of the people to pray for rulers, to respect their office and authority, to obey their lawful commands, to pay them all just dues ; nor may any person, on the plea of ecclesiastical employment or dignity, claim exemption from civil jurisdiction.

7. The duty of subjects to be obedient for conscience' sake does not forbid a people, when misgoverned or oppressed, to endeavour to change the laws or constitution of the realm, and, if necessary, to remove from office those rulers who have misused the authority with which they were invested.

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