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## ARTICLE II.

THE SECOND ADVENT AND THE CREEDS OF  
CHRISTENDOM.

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THE rule of faith with all genuine Protestants is the infallible word of God. In all matters, both of faith and practice, its authority is supreme. In every question of which it professes to treat, or upon which it distinctly touches, the decisive inquiry must be: What does the word of God say? Against all doctors and decrees, all councils and confessions, it stands, and must stand, as the only infallible authority and final arbiter.

But the creeds or confessions of the church are entitled to the greatest respect, and must have weight with all who do not prefer their own wisdom to the collected and tried wisdom of ages. Some creeds are the common inheritance, and express the common faith of all, or nearly all, who name the name of Christ. Others, though less generally received, yet embrace large portions of the church, and, on most points, teach what is recognized as "the faith once delivered to the saints." The creeds universally received, in ancient and modern times, by the Roman, Greek, and Protestant churches, as well as those portions of other creeds or confessions, containing doctrines in harmony with them, and recognized by all orthodox denominations, must be presumed to accord with the divine word. Were it not so, the whole church of every age, and in every land, must have been allowed to fall into error, a supposition scarcely reconcilable with the care which Christ exercises over his church, or with the gracious promises he has given. The *quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus* must, if not absolutely authoritative and final, at least weigh much with all who do not despise authority.

It is proposed in this Article to submit the doctrine of the

Second Advent, or certain features of it, as currently held and zealously taught by many at the present day, to this ordeal, and thus to judge how it agrees with the general faith of the church, as set forth in the standards of highest authority. Millenarians vaunt the antiquity and catholicity of their views. They profess their doctrines to be not only the doctrines of the Bible, but of the church in her best and purest days, and as taught and defended by her greatest teachers. Indeed, were we to believe some of this school, to question their dogmas is to doubt not only the voice of the church, but the very voice of God himself, and to incur the guilt of disbelieving divine revelation. It is boldly taught that the reason men do not believe the doctrine of Millenarians is because they do not believe the Bible. The biblical view of this important subject we do not intend here to discuss, but to compare the prominent and distinguishing points of Millenarianism with the creeds of the church.

There is a special propriety in examining this subject at the present time. The pulpit resounds with the doctrine of Christ's speedy coming to reign in person on the earth. The press teems with publications—volumes, tracts, and occasional sermons—inculcating the same views. Passing events are seized hold of to illustrate and confirm the oracular utterances of the pulpit and the press; and if individuals "be not shaken in mind, or troubled," it is from no lack of repeated announcements and warnings.

With considerable difference of views in some of the details, Millenarians are generally agreed on the following prominent and distinguishing doctrines, viz. 1. That the Second Advent of Christ will be pre-millennial; and 2. That he will reign in person, with his glorified saints, on the earth, a thousand years prior to the general resurrection and final judgment. Some have held and taught a very gross view, and placed the happiness of that period chiefly in sensual gratifications and enjoyment. Justin Martyr may be cited, as perhaps the best, and least objectionable, representative of the system in ancient times, and substantially followed by the advocates of

this doctrine at the present day. In his dialogue with Trypho the Jew, Trypho inquires: "Tell me truly, do you believe that this place, Jerusalem, will be rebuilt, and do you expect that your people will be gathered together and rejoice with Christ, and with the patriarchs and prophets, and with those of our race, and of those who became proselytes before the coming of your Christ?"

Justin replies: "I and many others hold these sentiments, and believe assuredly that this will come to pass. . . . I and those Christians who are in all things orthodox, understand that there will be a resurrection of the flesh, and a thousand years in Jerusalem, built and adorned and enlarged, as the prophets Ezekiel and Isaiah and the rest declare" (Dialogue with Trypho, chap. lxxx).

The two points stated may be regarded as the fundamental doctrines of the system, and upon these its advocates are united. They discard the idea of the world's conversion by means of preaching the gospel, with the accompanying influence of the Holy Spirit. They do not expect the heathen to be given to Christ for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession, while he remains in heaven at the right hand of the Father. But they announce the coming and personal reign of Christ as the great hope of a groaning and perishing world. They look for no deliverance or salvation for our race until he comes in power and glory to establish his kingdom and reign over the earth.

It is easy to see that the truth on this subject must be of very great importance in the work of evangelizing the world. If our actions are to be moulded by our views, and our works in any degree correspond with our faith, then is it of vital importance whether we believe in the power of the gospel and the Spirit of God to regenerate the world, or whether we must look for some other agency for the accomplishment of this grand design. If the world is not to be converted to Christ, and sinners saved, by the foolishness of preaching, then we should know it, and should cease to look for such results. If the coming of Christ in person be indeed the

grand remedy, then our attention should be directed to this as our only hope and confidence. But if Christ will not come until the end of this world, and then for a very different purpose from that of reigning here in person on the earth, our duty is to labor and pray that all the ends of the earth may see his salvation, and turn unto the Lord. The difference between us and Millenarians is one therefore of the highest moment doctrinally and practically, and in regard to which the church cannot afford to be indifferent.

There have been two periods in the history of the church especially prolific in the production of creeds or confessions. The former in the early ages, particularly from about the time of the Council of Nice, A.D. 325, and extending some centuries onward, or from the beginning of the third to the seventh century. The latter, the period immediately connected with, and succeeding, the great Reformation of the sixteenth century. The intervening period added very little to the confessional stores of the church.

We begin our comparison with the creeds of the former period, giving special prominence to the three ecumenical or general creeds — the Apostles', the Nicene, and the Athanasian. These have had a degree of authority awarded to them, that, next after the word of God, must challenge our respectful attention and regard.

### 1. *The Apostles' Creed.*

This, if not absolutely the oldest written creed of the Christian church, at least claims to be, and probably is, the oldest in substance and fact. Giving little heed to the fable of Rufinus as to its origin, we may, nevertheless, admit it to be truly Apostolic. Long before we have any satisfactory evidence of its existence in writing, we are assured that it was engraven on the hearts and lived in the consciousness of the followers of Christ; and that it embodies the faith of the first disciples of our Lord. It has been recognized by the Catholic, Greek, and Protestant churches, and is perhaps better known, and more frequently repeated throughout

Christendom than any other composition, except the Lord's Prayer. In simplest form and fewest words it expresses the faith of the church in her earliest years, and now, after the lapse of ages, and when extended over the earth. Its well known words touching the Second Advent of Christ in our own tongue, are: "From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead." The Textus receptus of the original has: Greek, *ἐκεῖθεν ἐρχόμενον κρίναι ζώντας καὶ νεκρούς*. Latin, *inde venturus iudicare vivos et mortuos*.

Upon this article, the learned and judicious bishop Pearson, in his Exposition of the Creed, says: "That the end for which he shall come, and the action which he shall perform when he cometh, is to judge"; and that he, "at his coming shall gather together all those which shall then be alive, and all which ever lived, and shall be before that day dead: when, causing them all to stand before his judgment seat, he shall judge them all according to their works done in the flesh."

As this creed was designed to express the great doctrines of redemption, and as it was in the heart of the church during the very period when some would have us believe that Millenarianism was almost universally received, and as it took its definite written form just after the most flourishing period of that system, it must appear strange that it could find no place in such a summary of the Christian faith.

## 2. *The Nicene Creed.*

The Nicene Creed is better known, and more generally recognized than any other, except the Apostles', and in the Oriental church it has entirely superseded that confession. It has in its original form *καὶ ἐρχόμενον κρίναι ζώντας καὶ νεκρούς*, and in the amended Nicaeno-Constantinopolitan *καὶ πάλιν ἐρχόμενον μετὰ δόξης κρίναι ζώντας καὶ νεκρούς*, "And will come [again with glory] to judge the quick and the dead." Between the Apostles' and the Nicene there is even a verbal agreement, and the meaning is clear.

### 3. *The Athanasian Creed.*

This creed, usually fixed about the close of the fifth or beginning of the sixth century, and the next most important symbol of the early church, has the following: *Inde venturus est judicare vivos et mortuos. Ad cujus adventum omnes homines resurgere habent cum corporibus suis. Et reddituri sunt de factis propriis rationem.* "Whence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. At whose coming all men shall rise again with their bodies, and shall give account of their works."

An examination and brief analysis of these venerable confessions of the church, on the point under consideration, will give the following results:

1. All agree that Christ our Lord will come again. This has always and everywhere been a prime article of the Christian faith. Christ has come once in the flesh, but he is still to the church the *ὁ ἐρχόμενος*.

2. All agree that the object of his coming is "to judge the quick and the dead." This they testify with one voice; and, as preliminary to it, all confess the resurrection of the dead.

3. All imply, and one (the Athanasian) distinctly states, that this resurrection and judgment will take place at his coming (*ad cujus adventum*). No other view could be gathered from the language of these creeds; and they have been so understood by all who had no peculiar theory of their own to support.

4. All are silent about any pre-millennial coming, or personal reign, or any of the peculiar doctrines of Millenarians, and clearly enough inculcate directly the contrary. They simply know Christ coming to raise the dead, and judge the world.

In vain will any one seek for any shadow of countenance or support for Millenarianism in these early exhibitions of the Christian faith. By their silence they give no encouragement to such a doctrine, and, by a fair and natural interpretation of their language, they teach truths directly opposed to the entire system.

It will help to throw light upon this subject, and confirm what has been said about these creeds, if we produce other creeds of the same general period — creeds not so generally received, or highly prized, yet nevertheless not without their value, and especially important as evincing the common faith of the church, by her most distinguished teachers in that age. Of these creeds numerous collections have been made. We will chiefly make use of the collection found in the Appendix to Pearson's Exposition of the Creed, introducing from other sources such additional creeds as we deem desirable.

The first is that of Irenaeus, about A. D. 180.

*Καὶ τὴν ἐκ τῶν οὐρανῶν ἐν τῇ δόξῃ τοῦ Πατρὸς παρουσίαν αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τὸ ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι τὰ πάντα, καὶ ἀναστήσαι πᾶσαν σάρκα πάσης ἀνθρωπότητος . . . . καὶ κρίσιν δικαίων ἐν τοῖς πᾶσι ποιήσεται,* "And his [Christ's] coming from heaven in the glory of the Father, to gather again in one all things, and raise the flesh of all mankind: that, according to the will of the invisible Father, every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things on the earth, and things under the earth, to Jesus Christ our Lord and God and Saviour and King, and that every tongue should confess to him; and that he should exercise just judgment upon all."

Next is that of Tertullian, of which there are three several different forms in his writings: 1. *Venturum judicare vivos et mortuos per carnis etiam resurrectionem,* "Will come to judge the quick and the dead, through the resurrection of the flesh." 2. *Venturum cum claritate ad sumendos sanctos in vitæ æternæ et promissorum coelestium fructum, et ad profanos judicandos igni perpetuo facto utriusque partis resurrectione cum carnis resurrectione,* "Will come with glory, to take the saints into the fruition of eternal life and the heavenly promises; and to condemn the profane to everlasting fire, having first raised both the one and the other by the resurrection of the flesh." 3. *Venturum judicare vivos et mortuos,* "Will come to judge the quick and the dead."

Creed of Lucian the martyr: *Et iterum venturus cum gloria judicare vivos et mortuos,* "And will come again with glory, to judge the quick and the dead."

Of the Apostolical Constitutions: "And will come again with glory, at the end of the world, to judge the quick and the dead."

Of Eusebius of Caesarea: *Καὶ ἥξοντα πάλιν ἐν δόξῃ κρίναι ζῶντας καὶ νεκρούς*, "And will come again in glory, to judge the quick and the dead."

Of Cyril of Jerusalem: *καὶ ἐρχόμενον κρίναι ζῶντας καὶ νεκρούς*, "And will come to judge the quick and the dead."

Of Epiphanius: *ἐρχόμενον ἐν αὐτῷ τῷ σώματι ἐν δόξῃ κρίναι ζῶντας καὶ νεκρούς*, "Will come, in the same body, in glory, to judge the quick and the dead."

Of Basil the Great: *ὅθεν ἐρχεται ἐπὶ συντελείᾳ τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου ἀναστήσαι πάντας καὶ ὑποδοῦναι ἐκάστῳ κατὰ τὴν πράξιν αὐτοῦ*, "Whence he will come, at the end of this world, to raise all, and give to each one according to his deeds."

Of Augustine: *etiam inde venturum convenientissimo tempore, et judicaturum vivos et mortuos*, "Whence he will come again at the appointed time, and judge the quick and the dead."

Some others might be added to this list; but they perfectly agree in sentiment, and for the most part in letter, with those cited, as these do with the three ecumenical creeds. In no creed or confession of that age is there found any trace of Millenarianism. They all testify to Christ's coming to raise the dead and sit in judgment, and some of them specifically place it at "the end of this world," and thus unite the general resurrection and final judgment with the coming of our Lord. So far, then, as the early creeds of the first six centuries are concerned, they are unanimous on this subject. Directly and indirectly they are witnesses against the Millenarian doctrine, as constituting no part of the general faith of the church.

It would be foolish, however, to attempt to conceal the fact that during a part of this period Millenarianism was prevalent, and that some distinguished teachers of the church gave to it the sanction of their authority. Before passing from this period, a brief notice will be taken of the leading facts

in the history of this doctrine during these centuries. And it is believed that an impartial survey will show that there is nothing to conflict with the statement just made, as to Millenarianism constituting no part of the acknowledged and confessed faith of the early church.

1. The immediate successors of the apostles, the so-called apostolic Fathers, furnish no evidence in their writings of the existence of any such doctrine. The allusion in Barnabas (chap. xv.) to the period of a thousand years, forms no exception to this statement. Nor is there any mention of it by the early Apologists—Tatian, Athenagoras, or Theophilus of Antioch. "It is known," says Semisch, "that neither in the Epistles of the Roman Clement, Ignatius, and Polycarp, nor in the apologetical writings of Tatian, Athenagoras, and Theophilus of Antioch, can any trace be found of Millenarian opinions" (*Life and Times of Justin Martyr*, Ryland's translation, Vol. ii. 374). This must certainly appear very strange if it were a doctrine taught by the apostles. Undoubtedly their immediate successors, and who had learned directly from them the doctrines they taught, would not have been ignorant or silent on such a subject if it had the least shadow of apostolic authority. And this must appear the more singular when it is remembered that this doctrine has especially flourished in times of persecution and trials, such as these early confessors and martyrs experienced, and may well be supposed, if true, to have presented great attractions to men like Ignatius and Polycarp who sealed their faith with their blood. Instead of this, however, we find them profoundly silent, as though it had never entered their mind or engaged their thoughts. This silence of the apostolic Fathers on this subject must forever be fatal to the theory of those who would have this the primitive apostolic faith.

2. In the latter half of the second century this doctrine appears with considerable prominence, so much so that some have represented it as the universally received faith. During this period it can boast of such advocates as Justin Martyr and Irenaeus, names most sacred in the annals of martyrdom,

and these again followed by Tertullian, Cyprian, and others. No one during these early ages has given more distinct utterance, or by his authority given greater weight to this doctrine, than Justin Martyr. With him it was evidently a favorite doctrine, and one that he regarded as not only orthodox, but as constituting a part of a complete orthodox faith. Semisch has shown that they are mistaken who cite Justin to prove that this was deemed absolutely essential to a sound faith; but that Justin regarded it as included in the most comprehensive and fully-developed faith of believers. The statement that it was the universal faith of that age is certainly too strong. The remains of Christian literature of that precise period are quite scanty, and our means of forming an intelligent and satisfactory judgment, not the best; but the fact already noted, that it could find its way into no authorized or general statement of doctrine is not in its favor. It only appears as the view of individual teachers, and, as we shall see, met with prompt and decided opposition. Neander, so distinguished for his caution and fairness says: "Our knowledge of the times is too defective to enable us to assert that at any one period it was universally prevalent" (History of Doctrines, Bohn's edition, Vol. i. 249). "Whenever we meet with Chiliasm in Papias, Irenaeus, Justin Martyr, everything goes to indicate that it was diffused from one country and from a single fountain-head" (Church History, Vol. i. 651). This country was Phrygia, and to Papias, bishop of the church in Hierapolis, is the credit given of giving currency to this doctrine. Some, indeed, have charged the origin of the system on the heretic Cerinthus, and thus brought upon it additional disrepute. The most reasonable and best authenticated account is, that it was of Jewish origin, and crept into the church along with other Judaizing opinions, and for a season found advocates among church teachers. But, as Neander observes, it "is not to be understood as if Chiliasm had ever formed a part of the general creed of the church" (Church History, Vol. i. 561).

3. It soon met with the most vigorous opposition from

within the church and by the most distinguished teachers. The wild extravagances into which it ran, even in the hands of such as Irenaeus, was not well adapted to win it favor or friends.<sup>1</sup> Both east and west it excited alarm by its gross and sensuous representations, and the very manner in which it was opposed showed that it had no very strong hold on the enlightened judgment, and that it was not recognized as any part of the divinely established and received faith. The remark of Stanley is as truthful as it is piquant: "The fancies of Millenarians, however innocent and natural, and however widely diffused among small circles, have always been resisted by the robust sense of the universal church" (*History of Eastern Church, Introduction, p. 70*). Unfortunately for its success in these early times, it became associated with some of the rank errors of the age, and thus brought upon itself a double condemnation. Caius at Rome and Origen at Alexandria were among the first to raise the note of alarm. Nepos and Coracion undertook successively its defence, and a division of the church at Alexandria was threatened. But the doctrine could not stand the test of a rigid examination. Dionysius, bishop of Alexandria, assembled his clergy, and, after several days discussion, succeeded in convincing even the leaders of their error, and all renounced the Millenarian faith. After the third century only an occasional name is

<sup>1</sup> As an illustration of the extravagances into which even good men may run on this subject, the language of Irenaeus, quoting from Papias, may be cited: "The days will come in which vines will grow, each having ten thousand boughs; and on each bough ten thousand branches; and on each branch ten thousand twigs; and on each twig ten thousand clusters; and on each cluster ten thousand grapes; and each grape, when pressed, will yield twenty-five metres of wine; and when any one of the saints shall take hold of one of the clusters, another will cry out: I am a better cluster, take me, and on my account give thanks to the Lord. In like manner, a grain of wheat will produce ten thousand heads, and each head will have ten thousand grains; and each grain will yield ten pounds of fine clean flour; and other fruit, seeds, and herbage in like proportion" (*Irenaeus, Contra Haereses, v. 33*). It would not be difficult to furnish a parallel to this from Millenarian writers of the present day, although the extravagance is generally in some other direction. Examples will readily occur to the intelligent reader.

found in its support ; prominent among whom is the eloquent Lactantius. Jerome, if he did not reject or directly oppose the doctrine, spoke of it in such an ironical manner as was well calculated to bring it into disrepute, whilst Augustine did much to banish it from the church, by placing it in the catalogue of heresies. From the time of Augustine, for more than a thousand years, it had little countenance or support from the church. Its currency was not of long duration, and its spurious character was soon detected and branded by the advocates of a pure faith. Dr. Shedd with truth remarks, that "the period between the year 150 and 250 is the blooming age of Millenarianism ; and yet even in this period it does not become the catholic faith, as embodied in the catholic creed" (History of Doctrines, Vol. ii. 392). But its bloom soon passed into utter decay ; for if we regard the statement of Baronius as a little highly colored, yet its general truth cannot be questioned, when in the annals of A.D. 411 he says "the figments of the Millenaries being now rejected everywhere, and derided by the learned with hisses and laughter, and also being put under the ban, were entirely extirpated."

As it is not the design of this Article to give the history of this doctrine, but to bring it into comparison with the creeds of the church, we may pass on more than a thousand years and resume our task with the creeds of modern times. During these thousand years no changes were made in this article of faith. The second great period in the history of creeds begins with the Reformation of the sixteenth century. Protestants found it necessary to give to the world a declaration of their faith ; and as the hosts of Protestantism became divided, each new party defined by a creed or confession its doctrinal position. The Romish church also set forth new definitions and explanations of her faith, to meet the supposed exigencies of her case. Compared with the creeds of the earlier period, those of this later age are distinguished for their length, minuteness of detail, and introduction of minor differences of opinion. Each denomination or sect deemed it important to give the utmost prominence to its own dis-

tinctive peculiarity, and thus the ranks of Protestantism were divided, and have been kept divided, by differences upon points that were tolerated in the early church without the least division or discord.

But we have only at this time to do with the most prominent of these confessions as bearing upon our subject; and we begin with the mother symbol of Protestantism.

*The Augsburg Confession, A.D. 1530.*

The Seventeenth Article treats of "Christ's return to Judgment," De Christi Reditu ad Judicium. Referring to this Article, Hagenbach, in his History of Doctrine, observes: "The fanatical notions of the Anabaptists concerning the restitution of all things, and Millenarianism, were rejected by the Protestants" (Vol. ii. 370). Melancthon, in the Apology, says: "Our adversaries receive, without exception, the Seventeenth Article, in which we confess that Christ will come at the end of the world, to raise up all the dead," etc. How decidedly their Romish adversaries were opposed to everything in the shape of Millenarianism is well known to all in any degree conversant with the history and doctrines of that church. So that the Augsburg Confession was understood on all sides as in complete harmony with the old received catholic faith on this subject.

The Article itself reads as follows: Item docent, quod *Christus apparebit in consummatione mundi ad judicandum, et mortuos omnes resuscitabit, piis et electis dabit vitam aeternam et perpetua gaudia, impios autem homines ac diabolos condemnabit, ut sine fine crucientur.*

Damnant Anabaptistas, qui sentiunt hominibus damnatis ac diabolis finem poenarum futurum esse.

Damnant et alios, qui nunc spargunt judaicis opiniones, quod ante resurrectionem mortuorum pii regnum mundi occupaturi sint, ubique oppressis impiis.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It may serve to illustrate the views of Melancthon, the writer of this Confession, to quote a brief extract from his Loci Communes (Pars ii. De regno Christi): "Atque hoc Judaicum delirium saepe in ecclesiam irrepsit: fuerunt VOL. XXIV. No. 96. 81

“It is taught that Christ will appear at the end of the world (German, ‘am jungsten Tage, at the last day’) to sit in judgment, and that he will raise all the dead, and will give to the righteous and elect eternal life and endless joys; but wicked men and devils he will condemn, and they shall be tormented without end.

“The Anabaptists are condemned, who hold that there will be an end to the punishment of condemned men and devils.

“Others are also condemned, who are now scattering Jewish notions, that prior to the resurrection the righteous will possess a temporal kingdom (German, ‘ein weltlich Reich’), and all the wicked will be exterminated.”

Upon the import of this Article it is unnecessary to offer a lengthy criticism. Besides not one word to favor the Millenarian theory, and in express terms condemning such views, as “Jewish notions,” it distinctly places the Second Coming of Christ at the end of the world, and the object of his coming to be to exercise his office as Judge of the quick and the dead. Holding most firmly, as the Reformers did, to the ancient creeds, they could teach no other doctrine, and could not but condemn any views so directly in conflict with this doctrine as Millenarianism manifestly is. And such is the view of all who adhere to the Augsburg Confession in good faith, and where Millenarian views have prevailed in the Lutheran church, they have been tolerated only as not being fundamental errors. They have no place in, and can find no shelter under, this oldest and most celebrated Protestant confession.

*The Tetrapolitan Confession, A.D. 1530.*

This confession presented at the same Diet of Augsburg, on the part of those who could not subscribe the Augsburg Confession, is an additional witness to the faith as then held. It has, as it professes to “differ in nothing from the Fathers and the common consent of Christians (nihil a patribus, nihil enim et olim fanatici chiliastae et Popusiani, qui tale regnum anabaptisticum somniarunt.”

a communi Christianorum consensu variamus),” the declaration in harmony with the settled faith, concerning Christ’s coming: Ad dextram patris evectus est unde eum expectamus judicem vivorum et mortuorum, “Whence we expect him as Judge of the quick and the dead.” — Cap. ii. (Niemeyer’s *Collectio Confessionium*, p. 746).

*The First Confession of Basle, A.D. 1534.*

Art. iv. Disput. x. Inde venturum esse ad judicandum vivos et mortuos, “Whence he will come to judge the quick and the dead” (Niemeyer, p. 92).

*The First Helvetic or Second Basle Confession, A.D. 1536.*

Art. xi. Hunc (Christum) venturum ad saeculorum omnium finem, verum, rectumque judicem, ad sententiam, in omnium carnem, ad id iudicium prius suscitatum, laturum . . . . . expectamus, “We expect him to come at the end of the world (German, am end der welt), the true and righteous Judge, and to pass sentence upon all flesh, being raised up first for this judgment” (Niemeyer, p. 117).

*The Second Helvetic Confession, A.D. 1564.*

Art. xi. Redibit autem Christus, adserturus suos, et aboliturus adventu suo Antichristum, iudicaturusque vivos et mortuos. Resurgent enim mortui et qui illa die (quae omnibus incognita est creaturis) superstites futuro sunt, mutabuntur in momento oculi, etc. . . . . Damnamus praeterea Judaica somnia quod ante iudicii diem aureum in terris sit futurum seculum, et pii regna mundi occupaturi oppressis suis hostibus impiis, “But Christ will return to receive his own, to destroy by his coming Antichrist, and to judge the quick and the dead. For the dead will rise, and those who on that day (which is unknown to all creatures) shall be alive, will be changed in the twinkling of an eye. . . . . Moreover, we condemn Jewish dreams, that before the day of judgment there will be a golden age in the earth,

and that the righteous will possess the kingdom of the world, and their wicked enemies be destroyed" (Niemeyer, p. 486).

These two Helvetic confessions are quite decisive in their statements, and entirely agree with other Protestant confessions, as well as with the ancient symbols on this subject: 1. They place Christ's coming at the end of the world (ad saeculorum omnium finem, "am end der welt"); not at the beginning of the millenium, or a thousand years before the last great conflict between Christ and Satan. 2. He comes to raise up the dead and pass judgment upon all men. This is distinctly stated to be the object of his coming. He comes, not to establish a kingdom on the earth, but to receive his own to himself (in sedes beatas sine fine). 3. These "Jewish dreams" of a temporal kingdom are severely condemned.

*The Heidelberg Catechism*, A.D. 1562.

Quaest. xlvi. Quomodo intelliges illud: Ascendit ad coelos? Quod aspicientibus discipulis, Christus de terra in coelum sublatus est, atque etiamnum nostra causa ibidem est, et erit, donec redeat ad iudicandum vivos et mortuos, "That Christ, in the sight of his disciples, was taken up from the earth into heaven; and that he continues there for our interest, until he come again to judge the quick and the dead" (Niemeyer, p. 440).

According to this Christ remains in heaven, acting in behalf of his people, until he comes to the judgment of the last day. There is no personal coming prior to that grand and solemn occasion.

*The Belgic Confession*, A.D. 1562.

Art. xxxvii. Postremo credimus ex Dei verbo, Dominum nostrum Jesum Christum, quando tempus a Deo praestitutum, quod omnibus creaturis est ignotum, advenerit, et numerus Electorum completus fuerit, e coelo rursus venturum, idque corporaliter et visibiliter, sicuti olim illuc ascendit, cum gloria et majestate, ut se declaret iudicem vivorum et mortuorum. . . . . Omnes enim antea mortui e terra tunc

resurgent. . . . . Qui porro ultimo illo die superstites erunt, nequaquam morientur more reliquorum, sed momento et jactu oculi, immutabuntur, " Finally, we believe from the word of God, that when the time appointed by God shall come, which is unknown to all creatures, and the number of the elect shall have been completed, our Lord Jesus Christ will come again from heaven, and this corporally and visibly, as formerly he ascended thither, with glory and majesty, that he may declare himself Judge of the quick and the dead. . . . . For all that were already dead shall then rise from the earth. . . . . Moreover, those who are alive at that last day, will not die after the manner of others, but in a moment and the twinkling of an eye will be changed" (Niemeyer pp. 387, 388).

Here it is expressly taught that Christ will not come until the last day, and when the number of the elect shall be completed, that at his coming, not a part, but all the dead shall rise, and that he will appear as the Judge of the living and the dead.

*The Scotch Confession*, A.D. 1560.

Art. xi. Sicut etiam sine dubio credimus, ultimum judicium futurum, ad cujus executionem, certo confidimus, eundem Dominum Jesum visibiliter rediturum, sicut visus est ascendere, et quod tunc tempus recreationis et restitutionis rerum omnium veniet, finiter credimus, " Thus also we believe, without doubt, that there will be a final judgment, to whose execution we with certainty expect the same Lord Jesus visibly to return, as he was seen ascending, and that then will come the time of the renewing and restoring of all things" (Niemeyer, p. 345).

*The Anglican Confession, or Thirty-nine Articles*,  
A.D. 1551-1562.

Art. iv. Christus vere a mortuis resurrexit . . . . . in coelum ascendit, ibique residet, quoad extremo die judicandos homines reversurus sit, " Christ did truly rise again from

death . . . . and ascended into heaven, and there sitteth, until he return to judge all men at the last day ” (Niemeyer, p. 601).

This Article is definite in itself, limiting Christ’s return to the last day, until which time he remains seated in heaven, and when he does come it is to judge all men. But these Articles in the older form, as the Articles of Edward VI., had besides this Fourth Article, also the forty-first, thus :

Qui millenariorum fabulam revocare conantur, sacris literis adversantuo et in Judaica deliramenta sese praecipitant, “ Those who are endeavoring to revive the fable of the Millenarians oppose the sacred scriptures, and run head-long into Jewish follies ” (Niemeyer, p. 600).

This leaves no doubt about the views of those who compiled this confession. The very thing is pointed out by name, and reprobed in the strongest terms.

*The Westminster Confession and Catechisms,*

A.D. 1643–1648.

Confession, Art. viii. “ And shall return to judge men and angels at the end of the world.” Larger Catechism, Quest. 56. “ Christ . . . . shall come again at the last day in great power, and in the full manifestation of his own glory, and of his Father’s, with all his holy angels, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God, to judge the world in righteousness.”

His coming is here set down “ at the last day,” and for the purpose of judging the world. These are not all, but they embrace the chief and most important of the Protestant confessions, and among the others there will be found no dissent from the views here expressed. We have chosen to cite the words of these confessions, that they might be allowed to speak for themselves. Their own testimony is more convincing than anything we could say of them. We have here the united testimony of Luther and Melancthon, of Zwingli and Bucer, of Calvin and Knox, of Ursinus and Olevianus, of the great Anglican divines, Episcopal and Presbyterian,

joined by the whole Protestant church of the sixteenth century. Among them all there appears no discordant or conflicting testimony. They were jealous of the honor of their Divine Redeemer, and devoted themselves to his glory. For the welfare of his kingdom they lived and labored. They all believed in his kingdom as being spiritual, and were unanimous in their testimony to the following points :

1. That Christ will continue to occupy his mediatorial throne in heaven until all the redeemed are gathered into his fold. Exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, he will extend his kingdom and subjugate the world to his sway, by the power he exercises on that throne, and not by coming in person to establish an earthly kingdom, or to reign visibly over the world.

2. That Christ will not come again until the end of the present world. His coming is identified with the end of this dispensation, or of the present world as under the providence and grace of God. His coming ushers in an entirely new order of things, terminating the probation of this earth, and commencing the period of retribution.

3. That when Christ does come it will be to the general resurrection and judgment of the last day. A partial, literal resurrection of saints to dwell upon the earth before the general resurrection, as well as a personal reign of Christ over this world, is a doctrine unknown to the faith of the Reformers.

It remains that we compare in this examination the Catholic and Greek confessions. The Catholic church boasts of her faith as truly apostolic, having received it and handed it down unimpaired from the apostles. However she was constrained by the upheaving of the great Reformation to give to the world a new exposition and confirmation of her faith. It is entirely foreign to our purpose to examine the claims of the Catholic church to apostolicity, or to discuss the soundness of her teachings. It has been indeed a mooted question where the true doctrines of the Catholic church are to be found, or what are to be considered as her symbolical writ-

ings; and upon this subject her own authorities are not entirely agreed. The most reliable authorities name the canons and decrees of the Council of Trent (*Canones et Decreta Concilii Tridentini*), the Tridentine or Roman Catechism (*Catechismus Romanus, ex Decreto Concilii Tridentini*), and the Profession of Faith (*Professio fidei Tridentinae*), contained in the Bull of Pius IV., 1564, giving the greatest weight to the first of these documents. Möhler, who may be regarded as the very highest authority on this subject, says in reference to the Canons and Decrees of Trent and their symbolical character: "Every other writing that may bear such a title is only a deduction from this formulary, or a nearer definition, illustration, or application of its contents, or is in part only regulated by it, or in any case obtains a value only by agreement with it, and hence cannot in point of dignity, bear a comparison with the original itself." It may not be amiss in passing to observe that a doctrine need not be suspected because of being found in the creed of that church, for confessedly most of the great doctrines are retained and zealously defended by her, however she may have corrupted and destroyed the truth by admixtures of error. She has never been charged with unsoundness or false teaching on the particular point under consideration, but has adhered closely to the ancient creeds and the faith of the Fathers.

1. *Council of Trent, Sessio III., A.D. 1546.*

The decree concerning the faith — *de symbolo fidei* — has in reference to Christ: *Sedet ad dextram Patris, et iterum venturus est cum gloria judicare vivos et mortuos, cujus regni non erit finis* — "sitteth at the right hand of the Father, and will come again with glory, to judge the quick and the dead; of whose kingdom there shall be no end." The symbol adopted was simply the Nicaeno-Constantinopolitan, and, of course, does not differ on this doctrine. The Tridentine Profession of Faith includes the same formula, and all authorized teachers of the church are expected and required to conform to its doctrines (*Sarpi, Hist. Concil. Trent.*).

2. *The Catechism of Trent*, A.D. 1566.

This catechism, published by authority of the council, Sessions xxiv., xxv., and officially endorsed is of very high authority in the Catholic church. In it we find the following:

De vii. Articulo, Caput viii.

1. Quis est septimus articulus, quamque sententiam includit? "What is the seventh article, and what doctrine does it embrace?"

Inde venturus est judicare vivos et mortuos, "Whence he will come to judge the quick and the dead." And it is added: Cujus Articuli, ea vis est et ratio, summo illo die, Christum Dominum de universo hominum genere judicaturum esse, "Of this article this is the force and meaning, that at the last day Christ the Lord will judge all mankind."

2. Quotuplex est Christi adventus?

Sacrae literae duos Filii Dei adventus esse testantur; alterum cum salutis nostrae causa carnem assumpsit, et homo in virginis alvo effectus est; alterum, cum in consummatione saeculi ad judicandos omnes homines veniet. Hic adventus in sacris literis dies Domini appellatur, etc., etc. Thus rendered by T. A. Buckley (London 1852), "For the sacred letters bare witness that there are two comings of the Son of God, one, when for our salvation he took upon him the flesh, and was made man in the womb of the virgin; the other, when he shall come at the end of the world to judge mankind. This coming is called in scripture, the day of the Lord; of which the apostle saith, The day of the Lord shall so come as a thief in the night; and our Lord himself, But of that day and hour no one knoweth" (Cat. Rom. ex Decreto Concilii Tridentini, etc.).

As illustrating and confirming the faith of the Catholic church on this subject, we may cite one or two additional authorities. The extended Catechism of P. Collot, doctor of the Sorbonne, translated and published by authority of Archbishop Hughes, has Article vii.

2. "What mean those words: Whence he shall come to

judge?"—"That at the end of ages he shall visibly descend from heaven, and shall come in majesty to judge all mankind, and render to every one according to his works."

2. "When shall he come down again?"—"At the end of ages, or at the end of the world, which is the same thing; for, when ages are at an end the world shall end too."

3. "For what purpose shall he come?"—"To judge all mankind. He came the first time to save men. The second time it will be to judge them."

Archbishop Kenrick in his *Theologia Dogmatica*, Vol. ii. 413, says of gross Chiliasm: *A foedo hoc errore semper abhorruerunt universi Ecclesiae Patres,*" which we prefer to leave untranslated.

The Greek church, besides the Nicene Creed, and the decisions of the seven ecumenical councils, held prior to the schism between the East and the West, gives greatest prominence to the Orthodox confession, *'Ορθόδοξος Ὁμολογία*, prepared by Peter Mogilas, the metropolitan of Kiev, A.D. 1642. This confession, questions 57, 58, teaches in strict harmony with the ancient creeds and that of the Catholic church.

*Orthodox Confession, A.D. 1642.*

*Ἐρώτησις νή.*

*Τί μᾶς, διδάσκει τοῦτο τὸ ἄρθρον τῆς πίστεως ;*

*Ἄπ. Τρία πράγματα· πρῶτον πὸς ὁ Χριστός μέλλει νὰ στρέχη διὰ νὰ κρίνη ζῶντας καὶ νεκρούς, καθὼς ὁ ἴδιος λέγει διὰ λόγου τοῦ (Ματθ. κε. λα.), "Christ will come to judge the quick and the dead, as he himself testifies in his word (Matt. xxv. 31)." It cites also in proof, 2 Tim. iv. 1: "Who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom" (Libri. Symbolici Ecclesiae Orientalis, E. J. Kimmel, 1843).*

Enough has been said to show that the confessions of the church, ancient and modern, Protestant, Catholic, and Greek, give no countenance to Millenarianism, but with entire unanimity teach a doctrine wholly irreconcilable with the first principles of that system. In modern, as in ancient times,

there have been found individuals of learning and piety who advocated this doctrine, but it has had no strong hold on the faith or life of the church, and it has uniformly exhibited a tendency to run into the most extravagant and foolish calculations and opinions. It is not intended by any means to charge all who embrace Millenarian views with such extravagances, but the history of the doctrine shows that in every age where it has prevailed, it has been thus distinguished. Modern Millenarianism, it might be easily shown, while boasting some gifted men, presents no exception to this statement. It may well be asked, can a system utterly destitute of any foundation in the common faith of Christendom, as expressed in all her great confessions, and directly opposed to it, have any just claim upon our regard?

Purposely little has been allowed in this discussion besides the creeds themselves, and just what seemed necessary to make out a somewhat connected statement. No witnesses have been cited from the Middle Ages, as this was not a confessional period. But we may, in closing the Article, listen to one that speaks the language of Christendom—one standing midway between the earlier and the later confessions, and echoing them both, echoing the common faith of Christians through all the ages. The faith of Christ's believing ones is sometimes more truthfully expressed in such a manner, than in formal creeds, or doctrinal treatises, or learned dissertations. About the year A.D. 1250, Thomas De Celano, a Franciscan monk, in words which have awakened a response in the hearts of millions, Protestant as well as Catholic, and which enter into the worship of a large part of Christendom at this day, sang:

Dies irae, Dies illa !	Tuba mirum spargens sonum
Solvat saeculum in favilla,	Per sepulchra regionum,
Teste David cum Sybilla.	Coget omnes ante thronum.
Quantus tremor est futurus,	Mors stupebit, et natura,
Quando Judex est venturus,	Quam resurget creatura,
Cuncta stricte discussurus.	Judicanti responsura.