

ARTICLE V.

THE ATTITUDE OF THE HISTORIC CREEDS
TOWARD HERESY.

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ARE the great historic creeds of the Christian church polemic? Are they definite and positive in affirmation? Do any of them evade contemporary heresies?

Undoubtedly the chief object of creeds has been to provide a home for Christian belief. A home is not primarily a fortress. One would not choose to dwell behind battlements all his life. A confession of faith is not first of all a menace to the enemy. But is it necessary to the security of a home that its foundations should be solid, that it should be so constructed as effectually to exclude wind and rain, that it should even afford some protection against the assault of a possible foe? If creeds be constructed chiefly for the comfort of their friends, and not for the confusion of their enemies, is it still indispensable to the comfortable estate of the former that the latter should be unable to molest and to make afraid?

It is proposed to take, in this article, a rapid survey of the chief symbols of the Christian church, with a view to answering the questions advanced. Only the most important *credenda* can be noticed, and these but briefly, yet with sufficient care for our purpose.¹

¹ The limitation as to space precludes the possibility of such ample citations from the church symbols as would illustrate and fortify the positions taken. Nor does it seem necessary to divert the reader's attention to numerous foot-notes. The accuracy of the historical statements in the article may easily be tested by reference to the standard church histories, and especially Schaff's *Creeds of Christendom*.

Christianity, being for the first two centuries of its existence on the defensive,—against Judaism, on the one side, and Paganism, on the other,—was, of course, little able to construct positive systems of Scripture truth. With the triumph of apologetic science, under Origen's lead, came the dawn of the polemic age, in which the contents of the Christian faith were formulated in precise and dogmatic statements. Religion ceased to exist mainly in the form of feeling, and took on the form of scientific cognition. When this age had done its splendid work, the barren period of scholasticism set in, and for eight centuries—from the first part of the eighth to the beginning of the sixteenth—ruled the church, adding little to the definition or the defence of the Christian system. Then came the Reformation, intensely aggressive in its restatements of the truths of revelation, and vastly increasing the already extensive literature of symbolics.

With the age of apologetics this article has nothing to do,—and nothing with the mediæval philosophizing. The periods of constructive theology—that from the Council of Nice to the age of Gregory, and that from the Reformation to the Westminster Assembly—will engage our attention.

Not because it was first formulated, but because it is popularly supposed to be the earliest of confessions, and because it is the simplest, we may glance at the so-called Apostles' Creed. Erasmus wrote: "Never was the Christian faith purer or more undefiled than when the world was content with a single creed, and that the shortest we have." Much similar eulogy has been pronounced over this wonderful composition. The church has not seldom been pressed to adopt it as a sufficient declaration of her faith. But several facts are worthy of note. In the first place, "the world" was not "content with a single creed," nor was the world content with the Apostles' Creed. There are indications that the Fathers were not altogether agreed upon it. Some cite it without the

clause relating to the "descent into hell"; others omit the "communion of saints"; others leave out "the life everlasting." If the clause relating to the forgiveness of sins was inserted as against the Novatian heresy,—in reference to sins committed after baptism,—the creed so far was polemic, and the Novatians, at least, were not "content" with it.

But far more important is the fact that the church was unable to keep herself pure on the basis of this confession. The moment men began to define, disagreement emerged. Members of the Arian and Sabellian parties claimed the right of remaining in the church on the ground that they believed the creed; nay, more, of preaching their heresies as the correct interpretation of the creed. They held to a Trinity. Their mode of apprehension of the Trinity they defended as being consistent with the apostolic formula. Yet Erasmus would have us believe that the Christian faith was "never purer or more undefiled" than at the time when Sabellius was preaching the doctrine of a modal Trinity, and Arius was affirming the creation by the Father of the Son. So soon as men began to tell one another what they understood to be the meaning of the Apostles' Creed, its insufficiency to meet the dogmatic requirements of the church became manifest. The church on her knees could find no more satisfying expression of the faith of her heart. The church militant needed a more elaborate equipment.

She went to work to provide for her needs. Hence the Nicæno-Constantinopolitan symbol, the work of the two ecumenical councils held, the first at Nice in 325 A.D., and later,—after the Semi-Arian reaction and a partial revival of Sabellianism,—that at Constantinople in 381. It is hardly necessary to say that the immediate occasion of the calling of the Council of Nice was the appearance of heresy. The controversy concerning the Trinity, which had begun in the discussions of Irenæus, Tertullian, and Cyprian, had become intense in the early part

of the fourth century. Hence the need of a more elaborate and explanatory statement of the belief of the church as to the points at issue.

Several facts are to be noted and pondered.

First, the well-meant effort of the emperor to preserve a semblance of peace. "My advice," he says, "is neither to ask nor answer questions which, instead of being scriptural, are the mere sport of idleness or an exercise of ability; at best, keep them to yourselves and do not publish them. You agree as to fundamentals." It was impossible for a man like Constantine to appreciate the intimate and invariable connection between a scriptural theology and a vigorous spiritual life. He realized the blessings of peace within the church. He did not comprehend that there is something more blessed than external peace,—loyalty to the faith once delivered to the saints.

Again, the Nicæno-Constantinopolitan symbol not only furnishes the reader a clear apprehension of the position of the church, but it makes misapprehension impossible by its exact definitions and exhaustive explanations. What was heresy no longer remained matter for doubt. Patripassianism and Monarchianism could no longer claim to be orthodox. Arianism and Sabellianism could no longer equivocate and evade. Against these, as well as against Origenistic views of the Trinity then prevalent, Homoiousianism was an effectual bar. Hagenbach estimates that the principal, if not all the fundamental errors to which the human mind is liable in the construction of the doctrine of the Trinity, are specified, rejected, and condemned in this symbol. There is, so far as we know, no tradition to the effect that Arius and Sabellius saved their orthodoxy by any "for substance of doctrine" subscription to the creed.

Again, the fate of Eusebius of Cæsarea and his olive branch is suggestive. His desire was to mediate, to unite the various parties on the pacific platform of Homoiousian-

ism. He came with earnest purpose and profound learning to expound his treaty of peace. Of course, he was supported by the Arians. They were of opinion that lion and lamb could lie down together upon his platform. The orthodox party did not think so; and compromise was rejected.

And once more. While declining, on the one hand, to make patchwork of the creed for the sake of compromise, and, on the other, to express its decisions in nebulous language for the sake of temporary peace, the council sought to exhibit the doctrine of the Trinity in its completeness. The legitimate restraining and corrective influence of party on party had full play. The mystical tendencies of the East were held in check by the calm logic of the West, while the matter-of-fact mind of the latter was elevated and purified by the speculative and spiritual thought of the former. The Nicene Council was not afraid to employ terms and conceptions which had been advanced by those who were held to be in error. The Monarchians had strongly asserted that God is one Essence or Being. This the council endorsed. The two Eusebiuses and many of the oriental party, being Origenistic in their views, violently opposed the Monarchian conception, and maintained the distinct personality of the Son and his eternal generation. These two truths, with restrictions and definitions, the council calmly incorporated into the creed. Sabellianism itself had employed the term "*Homoousios*" to denote the conception of consubstantiality. This term the council appropriated, and about it the battle raged. All that was true in the Arian dogma was recognized and approved. The council thought the subject through as no one of the contending parties had done, did justice to every element of truth contributed, unified the data of Scripture into a complete and harmonious whole, and sent every bishop to his home with the means of determining his own position and of deciding whether he fairly belonged within the communion of the orthodox church.

At the beginning of the fifth century the orthodox theology was dominant. The Eastern Church accepted the faith of Basil, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Chrysostom; while the Western Church owned the supremacy of Augustine. But, at about the same time, two more controversies broke out and raged with fury,— that between Nestorius and Cyril of Alexandria relative to the two natures of Christ, and the anthropological contest between Pelagius and Augustine. These controversies were the occasion of the calling of the third ecumenical council, which convened at Ephesus in 431 A.D., the year after Augustine's death, and issued a symbol in which Nestorianism was explicitly, and Pelagianism implicitly, condemned. The polemic attitude of this symbol is emphasized by the denunciations directed against laymen or clergymen "who shall dare to compose any other creed."

Twenty years later, the statement of the Fathers in council at Chalcedon sufficiently explains their conception of the purpose for which they met. The enlarged creed of Constantinople (381) is appended to the shorter form of Nice (325), "that those things also should be maintained which were defined by the 150 holy Fathers of Constantinople *for the taking away of the heresies which had then sprung up*, and the confirmation of the same, our catholic and apostolic faith." The Nestorian controversy had passed over into the Eutychian. The new heresy maintained, in direct opposition to Nestorius, that the human nature in Christ was merged in the divine, making only one nature (Monophysitism). The third council had condemned the opposite error, but had neglected to fix the true doctrine. A compromise had consequently been patched up between the contending schools of Alexandria and Antioch, in which each party sacrificed, in part, its own convictions. Like all compromises, it only postponed the inevitable disruption. Principles then, as ever, developed to their logical conclusion. Antioch had begotten Nestorianism, ascribing to Christ a double personality. Alexandria, by way of reaction, then brought

forth the opposite error, Eutychianism, which annihilated the true humanity of Christ by making the divine Logos absorb the human nature. Disputation began. Mild spirits on both sides counselled peace, but there was no peace. The union creed proposed satisfied none of the vigorous minds. Eutyches, canonized by the "Council of Robbers," had occasion to pray to be delivered from his friends. Quiet was not restored until the ecumenical council at Chalcedon finished the work of the Ephesian council by condemning Eutychianism and by affirming one Christ *in* two natures, not *from* two natures,—the two natures being "without confusion, without conversion, inseparably and perpetually." The issue was squarely met, without favor to either side, and without evasion.

That the Athanasian Creed (*Symbolum Quicunque*) is polemic in attitude and definite in statement no one will question who has read the creed itself and the damnatory clauses in its prologue and epilogue. It presents the church doctrine of the Trinity in opposition to Photinus, who denied the divinity, and against Apollinaris, who denied the humanity, of Christ. In the opinion of Dr. Schaff, "This creed is unsurpassed as a masterpiece of logical clearness, vigor, and precision; and so far as it is possible at all to state in limited dialectic form and to protect against heresy the inexhaustible depths of a mystery into which the angels desire to look, this liturgical, theological confession achieves the task."

The Quicunque closes the series of ecumenical creeds. Councils were subsequently called to deal with heresies. The fifth council (Constantinople, 553) condemned the Nestorian tendencies of the Antioch school, and adopted anew the faith of Chalcedon. The Semi-Pelagian controversy was left undecided, only to reappear at the time of the Reformation. The sixth council, at the same place one hundred and thirty years later (680), necessitated by the Monothelite controversy, condemned the theology of so august a heretic as a pope,—Honorius having affirmed

“an absolute harmony of the human and divine energy in Christ.”

But the age of creed-making was at an end when the church fell into the stagnant, corrupt condition of the Middle Age. Interest in creeds has never been synchronous with decadence in spiritual life. It was not until the heart of the church was quickened that new formulas of faith became necessary.

Pausing a moment at this point, it may be said fairly that the early church was led to declare her faith either by the attacks of heretics or by the defective statements of believers. Accurate definitions were made necessary by the bold promulgation of inaccurate definitions. The latitudinarian and the heretic forced the church to a defensive and polemic attitude. This is especially evident in the fact that those parts of the Christian system which were most vehemently assailed are the parts which are most fully defined and developed. The theology and christology of the Scriptures were the points of furious attack. Heresies in anthropology, soteriology, and eschatology undoubtedly existed, and the church did not fail to meet them. But the burning questions were concerning the Trinity and the nature of Christ—burning questions, not from the choice of the church, but from the attitude of unbelief. The direct ratio between the vehemence of the assault and the vigor of the repulse in all cases discloses the temper and attitude of the church. Had the most serious danger threatened the doctrines of the redemption, those doctrines would undoubtedly have been most carefully formulated, to the comparative neglect of equally important but less imperilled truths. To return to our illustration, the home was protected at points where evils from the outside seemed most likely to enter.

Passing to the period of the Reformation, most fertile in symbolic literature, we find the christology of the early church reaffirmed, and the anthropology of Augustine

fully developed. The fountain-head of modern papal theology is the decrees and canons of the Council of Trent. The Tridentine symbol offers one of the best among our illustrations of the polemic and uncompromising attitude of the great historic confessions. There *was* a difference between Papal and Protestant belief. Why should it be disguised? Why seek to concoct a hollow peace by ignoring facts? It was a sad loss to Rome. A minority of the council urged conciliation and opposed the symbol. But nothing would have been gained by compromise. The only wise, manly course was the one pursued. Rome reaffirmed her faith in positive decrees, and explained the decrees in appended canons, punctuating the document with frequent anathemas.

The great confessions of Protestantism naturally divide themselves into two families — Lutheran and Calvinistic. An examination of these symbols discloses their twofold purpose,— to define and to expound the doctrinal contents of Scripture, particularly the doctrines of sin and redemption, which had been left undeveloped by the Patristic church; and to denounce explicitly the perversions of Papal teaching on the one side, and, on the other, the misapprehensions of Protestant doctrine by false teachers within the Reformed churches. In their affirmative statements these confessions are positive, definite, and complete. In their negative propositions they are polemic and uncompromising.

*Of Lutheran creeds, the Augsburg Confession is chief. It combines the firmness of Luther and the mildness of Melancthon. In terse, clear language it expresses the Lutheran faith. The first division, of twenty-one articles, enunciates the positive doctrines of the Scriptures, and expressly condemns those heretical and unevangelical tendencies which were beginning to appear in Protestantism itself. The articles begin with "The churches teach," and conclude with "The churches condemn," etc. The second division, of seven articles, condemns the errors of

the Romish ritual and worship. The Papal theologians having issued a confutation of this confession, a series of symbolical writings followed, which consist of restatements and vindications of the Augsburg symbol. The "Apologia Confessionis," the "Confessio Saxonica," the "Confessio Wurtembergica," the "Articles of Smalcald," and the "Formula Concordiae," present Lutheran doctrines positively and polemically. The points of interest are the unswerving fidelity of the church to what she held to be the truth, and the vigilance with which she guarded against unbelief and misbelief. The Antinomians could no longer hope to find shelter under vague propositions. Osiander and party, willing to subscribe to "Justification by Faith alone," *with their definition of justification, as a declarative act*, were given to understand that the purpose of the language of creeds is not to conceal thought. Melancthon himself discovered that general orthodoxy did not atone for synergistic views. Imagine both parties claiming victory after the convention at Smalcald! If the theologians once sought to promote harmony, their "Formula Concordiae" was pronounced an ignominious failure by the Calvinists, who dubbed it "Concordia discors."

Among the Reformed (Calvinistic) churches the wisdom of the separation of dissentients was recognized. Not by disguising differences and by professing unity, but by frank, definite statements of belief, is the symbolical literature of these churches characterized. The Reformed theology plants itself on the doctrine of divine sovereignty. It exhibits a full theory of predestination. Its anthropology approaches that of the Augsburg Confession, while on the subject of the eucharist it occupies an independent position.

To enumerate its twenty-eight confessions would be a work of supererrogation. Selecting, as the most important, the Tetrapolitan, composed by Bucer; the First Basel, by Myconius; the First Helvetic, by deputies at

Basel; the Second Helvetic, by Bullinger; the Tigurine and the Geneva, by Calvin; the decrees of the Synod of Dort; and consulting the Geneva and Heidelberg catechisms; we have sufficient data for a fair estimate of the Reformed symbols.

The existence of so many would, of itself, indicate disinclination to compromise. The intellectual temper of the Swiss reformers was not such as to satisfy itself with vague, indefinite statements. The spirit of the times was not favorable to a temporizing policy in doctrinal discussion. The hastiest glance at the symbolical literature of the Reformed churches convinces one that the men who constructed them were men without mental reservations. These creeds were formed in the heat of controversy. What with difficulties as to vestments and sacraments, disputes with Papists and with fellow-Protestants, the Arminian controversy and the Anabaptist fanaticism, Antinomianism assailing the received faith from one side, Unitarianism from another, there was every temptation to eclecticism in matters of faith. Instead of yielding to such temptation, the leading minds drew sharp, clear lines between truth and error. To suffer heresy to pass unchallenged was disloyalty to the church. When Rome declared that there was intrinsic efficacy in the sensible signs of the eucharist, Zwingli's reply was: "I believe, nay, I know, that all sacraments, so far from confirming grace, do not even bring or dispense it." There was no doubt as to his position. When the *Consensus Tigurinus* of Calvin appeared, no one holding the Lutheran views as to the eucharist, however adroit his casuistry, could sign it. When his *Consensus Genevensis* was published, no disciple of Arminius, however flexible his conscience, could have subscribed to it. When the Second Helvetic declared that "God from eternity predestinated or elected, freely, and of his own mere grace, with no respect of men's characters, the saints whom he would save in Christ"; that "Christ took the sins of the world upon

himself, endured their punishment, and satisfied divine justice"; that "God, one and indivisible in essence, is without division or confusion, distinct in three persons"; it may or may not have been correct; but it certainly was candid, unreserved, straightforward. No honorable follower of Socinus or Arminius would affirm belief in it. That persons inclined to pursue a trimming policy might not be led into temptation, the Synod of Dort not only affirmed positively the five points of Calvinism, but kindly furnished weak brethren with a "Rejectio Errorum," which made it absolutely impossible for the wayfaring man to err.

The doctrinal confessions of modern Protestantism, the Westminster Confession, the Thirty-nine Articles, and, by courtesy, the Boston confession of 1865, cannot be charged with intentional evasion or incompleteness. The conflict between Anglicanism and Puritanism has issued, not in compromise, but in sharply defined distinctions and in clearly expressed beliefs. Whatever laxity of opinion may be tolerated in the English Church, the church, as such, is not prepared to maintain that vagueness of doctrinal standards would promote her prosperity. The fate of the "Articles to establishe Christian Quietness," issued in 1536, was enough to discourage further attempts of the kind. Earnest believers in the English Church have held that the true way by which to "establishe Christian quietness" is for dissentients to state clearly their differing views, and then peaceably to separate, calling no names and breaking no heads for conscience' sake. In Scotland the positiveness and definiteness of the Presbyterian faith has been marked. "Fixed stars and the Scotch lairds never change." True, some of our higher criticism comes from the land of John Knox; but it has not yet invaded the creeds of the churches. If it succeed in so doing, it will not have the sanction of any precedent of the past. And before it succeeds there will doubtless be abundant evidence that Jenny Geddes still lives.

The Boston synod of 1865 reaffirmed the Calvinism of the Westminster and Savoy confessions and, in reconstructed form, adopted essentially the soteriology and trinitarianism of the Protestant confessions of the old world. If we miss the savage "*anathema sit*" of the older creeds, we are not the less impressed by the fulness of statement in the modern confessions, and by their careful precision of language, whereby heresy in all forms is excluded.

This review of the historic creeds suggests some interesting questions.

1. *What are the conditions of church life which are favorable to the production of satisfactory creeds?* The grandest creeds of the Christian church have sprung from intense faith. They have come from the heart as well as from the head. They have emphasized the fact that no church really holds a belief until the belief holds the church, through the power of its inspiration in her spiritual life. The first formal confession of faith under the Christian dispensation came warm from personal experience. "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." The church hesitant has never formulated a living creed. Is it probable that she ever will?

2. *Where are creed-makers to find the data for their formulas?* The symbols which survive are expository of Scripture. The church has never instructed her deputies to ascertain and formulate the actual contents of Christian belief at the time. She has said: "Ascertain what the Scripture saith, and if we are in error correct us." The Westminster divines would have been amazed to be told that, as a creed commission, their duty was simply to record the prevailing religious sentiment of the day. What if some of the "returns" had not come in! What if the commission had failed to ascertain correctly the consensus of belief! The fate of the doctrine of the Trinity might depend upon the cleverness of these doctrinal census-takers! Nor has "Christian consciousness"

furnished the data for creeds, except as it has been entirely submissive to Scripture. This is not to say that consciousness has always correctly interpreted Scripture into credal form. It has been loyal to Scripture. The aim and motive have been to define the teaching of revelation. Counting of hands has not been highly esteemed as a method of determining truth. There is a wide difference at times between the sense which the church puts upon the teaching of Scripture and the actual contents of the faith of the church at the time. The church may be corrupted by notions. Its actual belief may be in part unbiblical.

3. *Will not the church do more harm than good by very positive affirmations of truth?* Right or wrong, the church has maintained that some truths are settled. Every thing is not an open question. There are unqualified statements which a Christian believer may venture to make without compromising his sanity. Accordingly the great symbols of the church have met the questions in dispute and pronounced judgment. The church has not evaded the assaults of heresy. Pursued by Untruth, she has not played the ostrich. Nor has she often effected a temporary and superficial reconciliation by veiling her meaning in misty phrase. Right or wrong, she has had the courage of her convictions. She has expressed her decision, not only so it could be understood, but so that it could not be misunderstood. The "substance of doctrine" has been substance, not fog. She has not intended that her deliverances should be taken in a Pickwickian sense. The party defeated has not often been in doubt as to the result. Both sides have rarely claimed the victory. Or, if a hollow truce has enabled both to boast, the real decision has only been postponed for a time.

4. *But ought there to be no effort at reconciliation?* The church has held that the true basis for reconciliation is the complete statement of truth. She has recognized that it is wiser that men should separate than that truth should

be sacrificed. Some of the symbols have been mild in spirit and pacific in tone. The folly of bitterness and animosity has been acknowledged. She has even been generous with her enemies. Recognizing the truth of Bossuet's saying, that "the mind of man will not lay hold of pure, unmixed error," councils have sought to embody in creeds whatsoever of truth has been mingled in the errors of unbelievers. Where opposing parties have stood for truths apparently contradictory,—as trinity and unity, fore-ordination and free-will,—the church has held that "the best way out of a contradiction is to maintain both sides stoutly." But she has also remembered that half-truths are more dangerous than whole falsehoods. There has been no bartering of convictions, no omission of truth to please one party, in compensation for omissions yielded by the same. Half-way covenants have not recommended themselves to the instincts of Christian faith. "The Yankee trick of splitting the difference" has not been recognized as a legitimate method of finding truth. Of all isms, semi-ism, in whatever form, has been most decidedly rejected. Conciliation has been attempted, but by means of complete, in place of partial, statements of truth. The animus of the church in this regard is well expressed in the avowed purpose of the Tridentine symbol: "Ut omnes sciant, non solum quid tenere et sequi, sed etiam quid vitare et fugere, debeant."

5. *Should creeds affirm doctrines and omit all theories of doctrines?* The church has maintained that a creed should be sufficiently full and explicit in statement to convey an intelligible conception of the contents of the doctrine affirmed. Speculation and inferences have no place in creeds. But the church has been forced by latitudinarian and heretical assault to explain her position. The policy of heresy has often been to profess assent to a creed, with mental reservations and certain definitions; in other words, has proposed its own theories of doctrine. The church, in reply, has maintained that such theories

have undermined the doctrine itself; has said: "You do not explain, you explain away; you take out the essence of the doctrine, and substitute a theory." Heresy has refused to discriminate, and has passionately declared its right to its own interpretations. Thereupon the church has defined the truth, and heresy has cried, in martyr tones: "You force on us your theories of doctrine." The latitudinarian policy has been to deprecate all definition on both sides. It has been zealous for the exclusive use of the language of Scripture in creeds. But it has never been able to maintain a strict neutrality in the presence of conflicting theories. Its negations have defined. Its protests have implied at least some definiteness. Its admissions have excluded some elements and included others, and here are rudiments of a theory. The real question, therefore, between the church and the latitudinarian, has not been whether there shall be theories, but whether theories shall be lucid and definite, or hazy and shapeless. The church has seen no good reason for living in the twilight for the sake of external unity. She has held that truth is quickening, vitalizing, as it is fully and clearly apprehended; that if an outline is worth having at all, it is worth having as nearly perfect as is possible. Therefore she has declined to play fast and loose with the expression, "theory of doctrine." To declare what a doctrine is and is not, may be confused, in indiscriminating minds, with theorizing and speculating concerning the philosophy of doctrine. But there is a world-wide difference which the church has come to recognize. When by "theory" has been meant some accretion of human philosophy, the church has pronounced it unnecessary to orthodoxy. When, under cover of this phrase, Unbelief has objected to interpretation and verbal expansion of essential Christian truth, the church has declined to be intimidated into silence.

6. *Should creeds avoid the non-essentials of Christian belief?* No divergence from the faith has been held to be

of trifling importance. Not only positive heresies, but unevangelical tendencies, have been condemned. There has been great change in the temper of the *credenda* as respects denunciatory clauses, but their jealousy of error has not diminished. The Westminster Confession is as stringent in its demands upon the faith of the subscriber as is the Nicene symbol. The church has held that the tendency of the natural heart is to diverge from the sterner doctrines of revelation. Its temptations are not in the direction of hyper-orthodoxy. Its fondness for "oppositions of science" needs the curb, not the spur. Moreover, the rights of heresy itself have required full, and, at times, minute expressions of Christian faith. Such expressions have invited Unbelief to equally frank statements. Thus unbelievers have been assisted in understanding themselves more fully.

But especially has the cause of truth been furthered by such explicit declarations of Unbelief. When heresy has been most positive and definite, the Christian faith has been most clear-eyed. The church believed, before Lord Bacon said it, that "Truth emerges sooner from error than from confusion." Next to exact truth, nothing has been more helpful to the church than exact error. It is the false doctrine not clearly stated, refusing to give its premises at all, and stating its conclusions only in vapory form, that has infected the Christian mind with undefined doubt and misgiving. Therefore, the church has not only declined to pare down her statements of belief too severely, but has invited heterodoxy to make full and clear statements. She has held that neither truth nor error derives advantage from the reduction of doctrine to its lowest terms. She has not thought to maintain vital growth on the bare "necessaries of life." Many truths which are not essential to her existence have yet ministered to her vigor and efficiency.

7. *Can creeds be so framed as to convey the same meaning to different minds?* The contents and form of the historic

creeds indicate that this has been regarded by the church as a difficult, but not impossible, task. The repeated explanations and the repeated rejection of false interpretations are significant. Language never seems so elastic as when put into a confession of faith. Even the ten commandments had to be amplified, lest they should be accepted for "substance of doctrine."

Nevertheless, the church has heretofore supposed that she succeeded in making herself understood. "*Ut omnes sciant, non solum quid tenere et sequi, sed etiam vitare et fugere, debeant.*" The terminology of dogmatics is fairly well defined. The controversies of the church have fixed the meaning of certain terms. No one at all versed in the history of doctrine can stumble over the meaning of such expressions as "federal headship," "total depravity," "original sin." Whether or not one accepts the doctrine implied, he knows the sense in which the church understands the terms. To use them in some new sense introduces confusion and savors of insincerity. Certain other terms are less definite,— "inspiration," "atonement." In using these latter, definitions are called for. With such definitions when necessary, with such technical terms of theology as are serviceable, and with a sufficiency of unambiguous language throughout, it would seem that the church need never want for creeds which, though not comprehensible to untrained minds, would convey to all students of doctrine the same understanding of the teaching of the church.