

tutelage and preparation of which the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews could say: "God who, at sundry times and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets"; and in the second place of the event itself in the course of the divine progress, so that the same writer could say: "Hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds"—or, to use the words of St. Paul to the Ephesians, "How that by revelation He made known unto me the mystery, which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men as it is now revealed unto His Holy Apostles and Prophets by the Spirit." We value and reverence the Scriptures because the Church through them makes known to us this "mystery," the Incarnation of God and the consequent blessing for all mankind. It is not a superstitious regard for a book, but an adoring reverence for God's love, as shown in this momentous event in the world's history, and the eternal life offered to every man who believes "in the name of the only begotten Son of God." These Scriptures make known to us the time, the place, the manner of His birth; they teach us that He was conceived of the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, that in Him were united the human and the Divine natures, that in Him both natures were absolutely perfect, and that the union in no way imperilled the integrity and absolute completeness of one or the other; that the Virgin Mary was the mother; that He had no earthly father, that He was conceived not after the manner of men, but by the Holy Ghost. These were all facts, as facts they are committed to writing, as they had as facts been preached by apostles. There was and is no question of the truthfulness of them to believing Christians. But could it be expected that then and in the early ages of the Church, as in every age, and in this age, they should pass unchallenged, or that even reverent and enquiring minds, in the effort to explain the mystery, in doing so should not fall into error; or that unbelievers should perhaps blasphemously deny this revelation—the highest revelation of God, His nature, His love, His will? This is exactly what did occur. Among the number of theories or opinions that were broached there were four that assumed alarming importance and significance. The Christian belief is that Jesus Christ, the Son of the Virgin Mary, was God, always God, always the Son of God, that He is eternally begotten; but a false teacher, Arius, arose who said in words skilfully used and liable to mislead, "that the Son is not unbegotten, nor any part in anywise of the unbegotten (Father), nor of any substance"; "That He did not exist before He was begotten or created or was decreed" (to exist). He said, "The Son had a beginning." He made Jesus Christ a demigod. He denied that He was God, and that in Him there was the fulness of the Divine nature; but looked upon Him as an intermediate being to whom worship of a kind was to be offered. He was not of the same substance with the Father, "Homoousios," but of like substance, "Homoiousios." This error destroyed the perfection of the Divine nature of the Son of God. If He were not perfect in His Divine nature, how could He have brought to men redemption? of what value was that sacrifice on the cross? Was it the death of one more than a good man, or a deified man? The question of men's salvation was at stake, and it was to conserve the hopes of a dying world, it was a passion for souls that led the Bishops of the

Church at the Council of Nicæa, A.D. 325, to condemn the error and give us the Nicene Creed. But if men could not succeed in shattering Christian hope by questioning the reality and fulness of the Divine nature in Jesus Christ, they might succeed in destroying faith in the perfection of His human nature. So error assumed a new guise, and Appollinarius denied that our Lord had "a reasonable soul," and asserted that "the eternal and immutable Mind or Spirit, the Word of God, took the place of the human mind." This denial of a human mind to Christ destroyed the completeness of His human nature. Again men's hopes of salvation were at stake, and at the Council of Constantinople, A.D. 381, the Bishops came to the rescue. Again we have another assault against the truth. Nestorius affirms that Jesus Christ was a man adopted to be the Son of God. He was a human child, became Son of God by adoption at His baptism, and at last was made One with God in glory. This error was condemned at the Council of Ephesus, A.D. 421. Then a fourth dangerous error was mooted—that of Eutyches. He taught that the manhood of our Lord lost its perfect and distinct human nature, but was transubstantiated into that which assumed it, again destroying the perfection of our Lord's human nature. This error was confuted and condemned at the Council of Chalcedon, A.D. 451.

"There are four things," says Richard Hooker, "which concur to make complete the whole state of our Lord Jesus Christ; (1) His Deity; (2) His Manhood; (3) the conjunction of both; (4) the distinction of one from the other, being joined in one." "Four principal heresies there are which in those things withstood the truth; (1) Arians, by bending themselves against the Deity of Christ; (2) Appollinarians, by maiming and misinterpreting that which belongeth to His human nature; (3) Nestorians, by rending Christ asunder, and dividing Him into two persons; (4) the followers of Eutyches, by confounding in His person those natures which they should distinguish against these; there have been four most ancient general councils: the Council of Nice to define against Arians, against Appollinarians; the Council of Constantinople; the Council of Ephesus against Nestorians, against Eutychians; the Chalcedon Council."

We have reminded our readers of these errors and their condemnations at the councils alluded to, first, to bring to mind the nature of those errors, and next to emphasize the fact that the Christian Fathers who drew up the decisions, and assented to them, were moved, not by a love of disputation or the joy of victory, but to preserve for men the pure Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, and a knowledge of all the consolations and blessings which God through it was ready to bestow upon believing men.

The Nicene and Athanasian Creeds come to us as rich and imperishable gifts, and we cannot understand how Churchmen can look upon them otherwise. The Nicene Creed dates from A.D. 325. The origin of the Athanasian is obscure; it was probably a compilation of the decisions of the Christian Fathers on Catholic truth, after the council of Chalcedon, A.D. 451. Bishop Harold Browne places it earlier, between A.D. 420 and A.D. 431. In them we have no new truth set forth to be received, but they state the old truth "in a new form for protective purposes, as a legal enactment protects a moral principle." They are negative rather than positive; they condemn error rather than assert the truth; they say "no"

rather than "yes"; they are the "safeguards of Holy Scripture."

When men find fault or speak disparagingly of the Creed—for after all what are the three Creeds but the one Creed amplified and developed to meet the needs of the Church, and in what particular are the difficulties in the way of faith greater in the Athanasian Creed than in the Apostles'—we confess to misgivings in regard to those who so speak. It requires no great humility, modestly to admit a wrongness on our own part, when we are tempted to place our opinion as to doctrine or phraseology against those of the great champions against error. Some one may say, we do not find fault with the statements of dogmatic truth in the Athanasian Creed, but we object to the damnatory clauses. We answer, are you sure of it? For want of knowledge or because of "a secret heart of unbelief," may not a man be led not openly to reject the doctrine, but covertly to insinuate doubt upon the whole, by attacking a clause or two towards the end. After all, what does the damnatory clause, so called, mean?

"This is the Catholic Faith which except a man believe faithfully he cannot be saved." God is love, and not a God of anger, hatred and revenge. These words simply proclaim a necessary consequence of unbelief. They are not one whit stronger than what the Bible says: "He that believeth not shall be damned," "There is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." If a man will not believe, the inevitable consequences must follow. Man makes his own condemnation and punishment. And since men must perish, if they will not accept the salvation offered to them, it is the highest mercy, in the plainest possible words, to tell them so. Apart from this, we may remember the words of Dr. Waterland, "This is to be understood, like all other such general propositions, with proper reserves, and qualifying constructions. As for instance, if after laying down a system of Christian morality, it be said: This is the Christian practice which except a man faithfully observe and follow, he cannot be saved; it would be no more than right and just to say: But no one could be supposed hereby to exclude any such merciful abatements, or allowances, as shall be made for men's particular circumstances, weaknesses, frailties, ignorance, inability, or the like; or for their sincere intentions and honest desires of knowing and doing the whole will of God, accompanied with a general repentance of their sins, and a firm reliance upon God's mercy, through the whole merits of Christ Jesus. There can be no doubt, however, but that men are accountable for their faith, as well as for their practice." The Creeds are a priceless heritage, they are pæans of truth victorious over error, they supply us with accurate language with which to confess our belief, they are weapons forged by heroes long ago, wherewith we may meet the assaults against truth to-day.

THE FIRST DAY OF LENT—ASH-WEDNESDAY.

SORROW FOR SIN.

"Almighty and everlasting God, Who hast made, and dost forgive the sins of all them that are penitent; create and make in us new and contrite hearts, that we, worthily lamenting our sins and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain of Thee, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

The great Lenten Fast has now begun. Once more the Church calls us to turn aside from the world, to detach ourselves from its pleasures, if

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