

THE APOSTLE'S CREED.

A Paper read by the Rev. George Rogers, B.A. Rector of St. Luke's, Montreal, at a meeting of the Diocesan Sunday-School-Association, 17th October, 1887.—(Continued).

II.—THE APOSTLES CREED.

Passing from the consideration of Creeds in general, let us now turn our thoughts to the Creed known as the Apostles' Creed. We will consider it in (1) its origin (2) its use (3) its substance, and (4) in reference to how it should be taught in our Sunday-schools.

1. In reference to its origin. There is a theory which has been very generally received to the effect that the Apostles, before separating, contributed each an article of the Creed, but this theory is without foundation, for the Articles "I believe in the Holy Catholic Church and the Communion of Saints" were not in the Creed for Centuries after the time of the Apostles. We cannot tell how this Creed came to assume its present form; the material of which it is composed is almost all found in the writings of fathers in the second century, though the Creed may not have been formed till a much later date. It was first called the "Symbol" and was only given the names "Apostles' Creed" about the fifth century. It underwent many changes from its first appearance, and only appeared in its present form in the beginning of the eighth century, in the writings of Arnimius, a Benedictine, who laboured in France and Germany. In the fifth century Creed did not contain the words, "Creator of heaven and earth," the clause "He descended Hell;" the Articles "I believe in the Holy Catholic Church the Communion of Saints . . . and the life everlasting." We see therefore that the Creed grew gradually. It is the expression of the faith of the early Church as a whole. And although it has never been sanctioned by any General Council, yet it has never been repudiated by any national Church, and it stands to-day the only summary of doctrine received by all Christian Churches, and the only doctrinal basis existing on which these Churches could possibly unite.

2. Having said this much in reference to the origin of the Creed, I will now refer to its use in connection with the Church. It was first used in the Hour Services of the Gallican and English Churches, about the end of the eighth century. At first the Choir alone took part in the Creed, the congregation remaining silent. Then in the time of Edward VI. the Creed was repeated by the minister alone, while the congregation remained kneeling, and it was only in the year 1552 that it was directed that it should be said both by the minister and people standing. The custom of bowing, at the name of Jesus in the Creed is enjoined by the 18th Canon of the Church; but the custom of turning to the East while the Creed is being said has no canonical authority, but it is as old as the second century when Christians worshipped toward the East to shew that they differed from the devil worshippers who worshipped toward the West. How beautiful and good is the use of the Creed in our services at present; for in it both minister and people unite their voices, in declaring their faith in God, in the same words, in which our fathers have declared their faith for over a thousand years. When it is said in our Services no tongue should be silent; for we honour God when we declare our faith in Him publicly. Our Saviour has said that, if we confess Him before men, He will also confess us before His Father in heaven; and St. Paul has said that while "with the heart man believeth unto righteousness" yet "with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

3. From the use of the Creed we will pass on to consider its substance. It is in substance, a summary of the essential doctrines of the whole Bible. It does not contain all truth. A Creed to contain all truth would be an exact copy of the Word of God. In the Creed we declare our faith in the Father, in the Son, in the Holy Ghost, in the Church of God, and in the blessings in store for those who are truly members of God's Church. We also believe in the Father and in the Son and in the Holy Ghost, but do we all believe in the Church of God? What is this Church? How many of our children are there who know what this Church is? How many adults are there who know what it is? Has it any organization on earth? and if so did our Saviour and His Apostles organize it, or was it organized by man? These are very important questions, for if the Church is an invention of man, then every man living has a perfect right to start a Church, to baptize and to administer the Lord's Supper. But if the Church was organized by Christ and His Apostles, then woe be to that man who shall break away from it, and organize a Church of his own; woe be to that man who dare administer the Sacraments which our Saviour has committed to the keeping of His Church. Our Church to-day is suffering from two parties, one trying to conform it to the Church of Rome, and the other placing it on a level with Dissenting Churches. I have known teachers to tell their children that one Protestant church is as good as another. This kind of teaching will fill Dissenting Schools and empty those of the Church of England. Let us see that our children are brought up neither Romanists, nor Dissenters; but members of the Church of England, knowing what the Church is and why they belong to it.

4. Lastly, let me say but a few words on how the Creed should be taught in our Schools. Every teacher should see that each child can repeat the words of the Creed perfectly from memory. This is very important, and great emphasis was laid upon it in the early Church; for Garibaldus gave orders to his clergy that if any man did not know the Creed he should be dieted on bread and water, and if any woman did not know it she should be flogged; I cannot, however, advise the clergy to adopt such measures. The doctrines of the Creed are also very important. The child should know what they are, and be able to quote the leading passages of Scripture on which they are based. This is important, but of still greater importance is that faith which is not embodied in words or formulated into doctrines—that faith which our Saviour speaks of in connection with everlasting life. To lead the children to this faith should be the great aim of us all. We should not only labour to gather the little ones into the earthly fold; but we labour and pray that God might use us in bringing them into the heavenly fold—in making them truly "Members of Christ, Children of God, and inheritors of the Kingdom of Heaven."

HINTS TO THE CONFIRMED.

Acts viii. 15, 16, 17; xix. 6. Hebrews vi. 2
By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God. Ephesians ii. 8.
If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him. Luke xi. 13.

BE HUMBLE.

Endeavor to live in a deep sense of your sin and weakness, and of the sufficiency of the grace of Christ.

Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.

Without me ye can do nothing. John xv. 5.
I can do all things, through Christ, which strengtheneth me. Philippians iv. 13.

When I am weak, then am I strong. 2 Corinthians xii. 10.

Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. Ephesians vi. 10.
Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls, as those that must give account. Hebrews xiii. 17.

BE WATCHFUL.

Remember that the enemy of your soul desires its ruin; resist the beginnings of sin, whether they come by evil thoughts,—evil company,—idleness. In conversation ask yourself, is what I am about to say true, is it useful, is it kind?

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour; whom resist, steadfast in the faith. 1 Peter v. 8, 9.

Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth, keep the door of my lips. Psalm cxli. 3.

Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh. Matthew xxv. 13.

BE PRAYERFUL.

Constant in your attendance at Church—pray also—when you lie down and when you rise up; pray—in your daily employments. Is anger rising? pray. Are you inclined in the presence of others to be ashamed of Christ? pray. Does temptation assault? pray.

I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord. Psalm cxlii. 1.

Pray without ceasing. 1 Thessalonians v. 17.

In everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. Philippians iv. 6.

Romans viii. 26. 2 Corinthians vi. 16, 17, 18; vii. 1.

BE HOPEFUL.

Press forward—rest not satisfied because you have been a partaker in this rite, but let your mind be directed at once to the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. If you come not thither, there will be reason to fear that the blessing to be expected in Confirmation has been made light of by you to the injury of your soul. Come, therefore, but with fixed purpose of heart to "yield yourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God." Come—"Repenting truly of your former sins, steadfastly purposing to lead a new life"; come—"with a lively faith in God's mercy through Christ, and a thankful remembrance of His death"; come—"in charity with all men";—"so shall ye be meet partakers of those holy mysteries," and shall go forth to "glorify God with your body and your spirit, which are His."

And Jesus said unto him, No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back is fit for the Kingdom of God. Luke ix. 62.

Remember Lot's wife. Luke xvii. 32.

For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come.

1 Corinthians xi. 26.

This do in remembrance of me. 1 Corinthians xi. 24.

But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup. 1 Corinthians xi. 28.

PRAYERS AFTER CONFIRMATION.

Defend me, O Lord, with Thy Heavenly grace, that I may continue Thine for ever, and may daily increase in Thy Holy Spirit more and more, until I come unto Thy everlasting Kingdom. Amen.

O God! I have promised to renounce sin, and to love and serve Thee. Teach me so to trust in Thee, that I may perform my vows, and take up my cross daily, and follow Christ unto my life's end. Grant this, O Lord, for Jesus' sake Amen.

DAILY MORNING PRAYER.

O Heavenly Father! I thank Thee for sparing me to the beginning of another day: keep me from wicked thoughts, words, and actions: may I often through the day look up to Thee in prayer for Thy Holy Spirit. May I remember that "Thou God seest me." May I keep out of the way of temptation, and strive to live as a child of God should live. O Lord, I am weak—do thou strengthen me, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

Our Father, which art in Heaven, &c.