

the phrase used by our blessed Lord, in His parting injunction to His disciples immediately before His Ascension: 'Go ye, therefore, and teach (lit. *make disciples of*) of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.' This Divine rule is followed in every branch of the Catholic Church, the two essentials of the Sacrament of Baptism being regarded as the use of water, and the recital of the names of the Holy Trinity.

3. We have an interesting picture, given us in the Acts of the Apostles (viii. 26-39), of the conversion and baptism, by St. Philip, of the Ethiopian magnate. After the deacon had expounded the Scriptures, and shown how all the Old Testament prophecies had been fulfilled in Christ, the stranger at once asked for admission into the ranks of the Church. 'See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?' And Philip said, 'If thou believest with all thine heart thou mayest.' And he answered and said, 'I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.' This reply embodied the great principle of Christian truth, and was taken as a sufficient guarantee of the thoroughness with which he accepted it, and as an earnest of his sincerity.

3. In his letter to his converts at Corinth (I. Cor. xv. 3 ff.) St. Paul lays down a very excellent and comprehensive summary of belief for the use of his disciples. 'I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures; and that He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve; after that, he was seen of about five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that He was seen of James, then of all the Apostles; and last of all He was seen of me also.'

Now the point to notice here is that the Apostle, while he recounts the death and burial of Jesus Christ, lays the greatest stress upon the fact of His Resurrection, and upon the completeness and variety of the evidence, which placed the event above the possibility of doubt or dispute. The reason for this is easy to find. The enemies of Christianity, including the heathen rulers as well as the Jews, at once realised the vital importance of the question. Just as the disciples of Jesus were content to let the whole fabric of their faith stand or fall by the truth or otherwise of their Master's Resurrection (because this corroborated or falsified His claim to be the Son of God), so the opponents of the 'new superstition' made the most strenuous efforts to explain away the disappearance of the risen Lord from the tomb. They even went about and openly bribed the soldiers who had been stationed near the grave to accuse themselves of dereliction of duty in sleeping at their posts, so that it might be said that the disciples had come by night and stolen the body. St. Matthew tells us that the whole matter was well known: 'So they took the money and did as they were taught; and this saying was commonly reported among the Jews until this day.' Now St. Paul, writing some twenty-five or thirty years later, lays down a challenge. He dares any one to disprove the reality of Christ's Resurrection: and mentions by name many of those whose testimony was trustworthy, who actually saw, and met, and talked with the Lord in His risen life, and were still alive. We can thus see why the great event of Easter Day forms one of the special articles of the Christian Creed.

4. In his Epistle to the Romans (vi. 17) St. Paul speaks in a way that shows the existence among the Christians in the Imperial city, even in those early days of the Church, of a profession of faith. He says, 'God be thanked, that

ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.' And when writing to the Galatians, the same Apostle thus speaks: 'As many as walk according to this rule (Gk. *canon*) peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.'

5. In the Epistle to the Hebrews, the writer enumerates some of the articles which would of necessity be comprised in a summary of Christian truth. 'Therefore,' he says, 'leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ (lit. *the word of the beginning of Christ*), let us go unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith towards God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.' He expresses a similar thought in the previous chapter by the phrase, 'the principles of the oracles of God.' No words more suitable could be chosen to describe the purpose of a Creed. It was intended to be the basis of the Christian life, which must be laid with all thoroughness, including those essential components which he mentions, before the superstructure of the ideal and perfect pattern of the Saviour's example is built up on this foundation.

6. Once more we must notice St. Paul's words in his letters to Timothy, whom he describes as 'my own son in the faith.' In the peroration of his first Epistle, he makes an impassioned appeal to the young bishop to hold fast the treasure of the Christian definition of the faith in spite of all opposition and difficulties. 'O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust (lit. *the deposit*), avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called, which some professing have erred concerning the faith.' In the second Epistle St. Paul gives the charge concerning the 'form of sound words' which was quoted at the commencement of this paper.

The above references are sufficient to show that we have clear and unmistakable traces in the New Testament of the existence of a Christian Creed. And the intelligent student will at once understand why these 'symbols' are not given in greater detail by the Apostles. The object of the immediate disciples and followers of Christ was to win men over from heathenism, or from Judaism, to a belief in Jesus the Son of God, the Messiah. Hence all that was required of them was a declaration that they accepted Him as their Saviour, and assented to the truth of those facts in His life which bore upon His Divinity, 'the word made flesh.' These were His Incarnation, His Passion, death, and burial, and His glorious Resurrection and Ascension.

As years went by, and the Church of Christ increased, and spread its influence from country to country, false teachers arose, who perverted the truth, and led away many into error. Then it became necessary, from time to time, to make additions to the existing form of Creed, defining in clearer language and at greater length, the special points on which the promoters of heresy had gone astray. We shall trace in the subsequent papers, the growth of the most important of these heresies, and the influence they had in causing new clauses to be grafted on to the original and Apostolic definition of the Christian faith.

#### NEW YEAR'S THOUGHTS.

"That ye put off the old man . . . that ye put on the New Man"—Ephes. iv. 22-24.

The commencement of the ecclesiastical and civil year does not coincide; but there is something very suggestive in the fact that New Year's Day falls within the octave of Christmas, and is observed by the Church as the Festival of the Circumcision. Our Christian poet

has given expression to this thought in the well known touching words—

The year begins with Thee,  
And Thou beginn'st with woe;

Happy shall we be if, throughout the year, we realise more and more of the presence of Emmanuel, for thus shall we be enabled to go on our way rejoicing, doing the work God gives us to do humbly and heartily, 'as unto the Lord and not unto men.'

But we dare not shut our eyes to the truth set forth in the remaining lines of the verse just quoted—

To let the world of sinners see  
That blood for sin must flow;

that thus we may be filled with a deep hatred and horror of sin in itself, and may daily fight against it. For, though the Lamb of God has, by the shedding of His blood, 'taken away the sin of the world,' so that we are indeed 'alive unto God in Jesus Christ our Lord,' yet the conflict with sin in our members continues, and will continue until 'this mortal shall put on immortality.' Hence the exhortation of St. Paul to the Ephesians in the words quoted above, because our old nature still asserts its power, and has to be kept down by the power of the Holy Spirit Who dwells in us as the Spirit of Christ, so that we 'may not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of our mind.'

In this work of 'transformation,' we are to be fellow-workers with God, and by our own individual act and will to 'put on the whole armour of God, that we may be able to withstand in the evil day,' and thus 'overcome the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil.' And we do well to remember and to realise that this conflict is always going on,—that if we would live as the children of God, we must not expect what is called an 'easy life,' but must be prepared, when God calls us to do so, to face the world, and to make a determined stand for Him against the wickedness (open and secret) which abounds on all sides. This can and must be done in no proud or ostentatious manner. Christians are the 'light of the world,' and it is by showing their light that the world will take knowledge of them that 'they have been with Jesus. If 'the old man' has to be put off, 'the New Man' has to be put on. In other words, while sin has to be avoided and overcome, the fruit of the Spirit has to grow and become manifest in us. All this can only take place as we faithfully make use of all those means of grace which God has put within our reach. We are not all circumstanced alike in this respect, and therefore must not judge one another though watchful and jealous over ourselves, lest we 'receive the grace of God in vain.' Our spiritual life needs sustenance—it will languish and die if this is not given. But while God has bountifully provided every means to this end, it too often happens that we fail to use them,—or we use just those which we like best, and which perhaps give us the least trouble. A new year is the time for a new start and new resolutions. May 1895 then see in all of us increased time given for private prayer and study of the Word of God; more diligent attendance at His House, and especially at Holy Communion; and may the Lord's Day be more carefully observed, that it may indeed prove to us a resting place, a day of refreshment from the toils and labours of the week. Thus shall we 'grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,' and be made ready for His coming and kingdom.

Take our hearts and circumcise them,  
Henceforth may Thy children be  
Subject to Thy will in all things,  
Yet in loyal sonship free.

A. B. C. in *Family Churchman*.