

Dominion Churchman.

THURSDAY, JUNE 8, 1876.

TRINITY SUNDAY.

In the early Church, this day appears to have been generally celebrated as the octave of Pentecost or Whit-Sunday; which in the Greek Church was closed by a festival of All Martyrs. The commemoration of the ever blessed Trinity in Unity, the three persons in one adorable Godhead, had always been celebrated in the daily services of the Church, in her doxologies, her hymns, and her creeds; so that the truth of the doctrine was continually brought before the body of the faithful. But afterwards, when the Church has been threatened with the corruptions of Arian and other heresies, which set themselves in opposition to the Catholic doctrine of the Trinity; it became evident that it was desirable to commemorate the blessed Trinity in the public offices of devotion, as the more solemn subject of our particular day's meditation. There appears to be no clear indication of the festival itself, until about the tenth century; and it was not till the beginning of the fourteenth century, that it was ultimately fixed for this Sunday. In some Churches, it had previously been kept on the Sunday next before Advent.

The octave of Pentecost or Whit-Sunday was no doubt chosen as most suitable for the solemnity because our Lord had no sooner ascended to the throne of the Universe, and the Holy Ghost descended upon the Church, than there ensued the fullest knowledge that has yet been communicated from heaven of the glorious and incomprehensible Trinity, which had been hinted at as the basis of all truth respecting the Godhead, at least two thousand years before. But hitherto all the revelations concerning it had been dark and obscure.

The lessons appointed to be read on this day bring the doctrine of the Trinity strongly and emphatically before us. The first lesson for the morning service, Isa. vi. 1-11, which contains that remarkable passage of the vision of the Lord sitting on a throne, and the seraphim forming His train, crying one to another "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of Hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory." The trisagion is understood to refer to the Trinity. The evening first lessons are Gen. xviii and Gen. i. and ii. 1-4. In Genesis the eighteenth is recorded the appearance of the great Jehovah to Abraham, who acknowledges Him to be the "judge of all the earth;" and Who therefore, by vouchsafing to appear with two others in His company, might design to represent to him the Trinity of persons. In the first chapter, the work of the Word of God is glanced at, and that of the Spirit of God in creation; while the phrase, "Let us make man," is generally believed to refer to the persons of the Godhead. The great Creator consulting about the greatest work of His creation, the making of man,

in which the Word or Son of God was one, since "all things were made by Him, and without Him was not any thing made that was made." The second lesson of the morning service, Rev. i. 1-9, contains a distinct revelation of the Holy Trinity, in the fourth and fifth verses: "Grace be unto you, and peace, from Him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the Seven Spirits which are before His Throne; and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth." The phrase "seven Spirits" means the Spirit, in His seven, or manifold gifts. The second lesson in the evening service, Eph. iv. 1-17, also contains a distinct allusion to the three persons of the Trinity; while the other second lesson, St. Matt. iii, contains perhaps the plainest manifestation of this sacred mystery, which at the same time relates the baptism of the Son, the voice of the Father, and the descent of the Holy Ghost; three distinct persons in number, but one in essence.

The Epistle and Gospel are the same that were read in the old offices on the octave of Pentecost, the last day of the more solemn time of baptism, to which the Gospel refers. They are also well suited to this festival under its more modern name Trinity Sunday, for the three persons of the Godhead are mentioned in the Gospel; and the portion appointed for the Epistle contains the Hymns of the angels, with its three-fold description of praise to God.

THE IRISH SYNOD.

Truth can afford to wait its time; it loses none of its purity, none of its lustre by fuller investigation and a more patient and calm discussion of its principles. The Irish Synod has passed through its ordeal much more satisfactorily than some had been led to expect, or than would seem to be indicated at its session last year. The alterations finally agreed upon are much smaller and involve much less of important principles than might have been supposed. As might be hoped by the sounder members of the Church, Lord James Butler and the Saundersons scouted the idea of anything having been done, and would rather they had all staid at home, while Canon Smith reminded the Synod of the large number of those who desire the Prayer Book should not be touched.

A motion by the Rev. Edward Norman to omit the words, "benefit of absolution, together with" from the third paragraph of the first exhortation in the Communion Service, was negatived.

The Bishop of Ossory moved, and the Bishop of Killaloe seconded, the insertion of words rendered necessary by the course finally agreed on as to the *Quicumque vult*:—"That the following clause do form a part of the preface:— 'With reference to the Athanasian

creed (commonly so called), we have removed the rubric directing its use on certain days; but in so doing, this church has not withdrawn its witness as expressed in the Articles of Religion, and here again renewed, to the truth of the articles of the Christian Faith therein contained." This would have passed without discussion but for Lord James Butler's unfailing hatred of the Athanasian symbol—which he again described as "a forgery and a fabrication, palmed off upon the world in an uncritical age, and opposed to the very words of our Lord, who had said, 'My Father is greater than I.'" Dr. Griffin, Dean Dickenson, and others protested against language which (they said) was unbecoming, and which involved Arian heresy. Lord James scornfully stated he was happily ignorant "of the science of theology; but he asked those who were learned in that science where the original of *Quicumque vult* was to be found—the hare which the learned men now required to cook. Dean Dickenson, in reply, challenged him to produce the original of the Book of Genesis. The storm quieted down as the Primate with his usual equanimity, gave Lord James some elementary instruction. The answer to what he said was contained in the verse of the Athanasian Creed in which it was said that the Son was "equal to the Father as touching His Godhead, but inferior to the Father as touching His Manhood." As to the Athanasian Creed being a forgery, a document was not a forgery because it had been ascribed to a wrong author. It was stated that the creed was "commonly called the Creed of St. Athanasius." If ascribing a Creed to a wrong author made it a forgery, the Apostles' Creed was a forgery, for they all knew it was not shown to have been written by the Apostles. The proposition was agreed to by large majorities.

Mr. Saunderson had long threatened an attack on "the two-thirds vote," which has hitherto proved the chief safeguard against rash changes in the formularies of the Irish Church. It was not expected that he could succeed, for all fair minded men recognized this as the basis of the whole Synodical system, and to alter which would be most unjust and unwise. Mr. Saunderson, however, made a long speech, and delivered himself of an oracular statement similar to what we have once or twice, listened to in this country. He said he "had been sent there; and so he must do something, right or wrong. He therefore moved a repeal of the law requiring a two-thirds vote of each order for any change of importance. Colonel Folliott seconded the motion. Fourteen speakers had their "say" upon the subject; and the result was, its rejection, there being only three clerical votes for it, and 139 against. The lay vote was nearly equally divided.

An effort was made to expunge the word "Priest" from the Prayer Book,