

The Church Guardian

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ments See page 15.

CALENDAR FOR DECEMBER.

- DEC. 2—First Sunday in Advent.
“ 9—Second Sunday in Advent.
“ 16—Third Sunday in Advent. [Notice of
Ember Days and St. Thomas.]
“ 19—EMBER DAY.
“ 21—ST. THOMAS. A. & M. Ember Day.
“ 22—Ember Day.
“ 23—Fourth Sunday in Advent. [Notice of
Christmas Day, St. Stephen, St.
John and Innocents' Day.]
“ 25—CHRISTMAS DAY. [Pr. Ps. M. 19, 45,
85. E. 89, 110, 132. Athan. Cr.
Pr. Pref. in C. Ser. till Jan. 1, inc.]
“ 26—ST. STEPHEN, the first martyr.
“ 27—ST. JOHN. Ap. and Evang.
“ 28—INNOCENTS' DAY.
“ 30—First Sunday after Christmas.
[Notice of Circumcision.]

HYMN FOR THE CIRCUMCISION.

BY MARY ANN THOMSON.

Jesu, Lord of glory, reigning
Throned in majesty, on high,
Yet, for sinners, not disdaining
Here a helpless babe to lie,
Let Thy precious blood, we pray,
Wash our stains of guilt away.

Jesu, by the first outpouring
Of the sacred crimson stream.
When but few, in faith adoring,
Knew Thy mission to redeem;
Let Thy precious blood, we pray,
Wash our stains of guilt away.

Jesu, by that Name most holy,
Name whereon our hope is stayed,
Name received in meekness lowly,
In the rite for sinners made,
Let Thy precious blood, we pray,
Wash our stains of guilt away.

Jesu, by the consummation
Of Thy work of love and woe,
Jesu, by the exaltation,
Of thy Name received below,
Let Thy precious blood, we pray,
Was our stains of guilt away.

—Philadelphia, Christmas, 1893.

THE HISTORY OF THE CREEDS.

BY THE REV. MONTAGUE FOWLER, Chaplain to
the Archbishop of Canterbury.

[From the Church S. S. Magazine, London, Eng.]

I.—THE NATURE OF A CREED, AND THE CREEDS FOUND IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.

Hold fast the form of sound words which
thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which
is in Christ Jesus,” is the injunction of the great
Apostle St. Paul to his disciple and spiritual
child St. Timothy. From this passage we learn
that “the form of sound words”—that is, a
Creed—is based on the principle of belief.

The Bishop of Durham has defined ‘faith’ as
‘the condition of life and action.’ No one can
live a day in the world without the exercise of
this quality. I am not speaking for the moment
of religious belief, but of the moral certainty of
what will happen in the future as interpreted
by the analogy of the past. Why do men be-
lieve, and act as though they believed, that the
sun which set this afternoon (using the popular,
as opposed to scientific, phraseology) will rise
to-morrow morning? What has happened is
not necessarily a pledge of what will take place.
But observation and study lead us to look for-
ward with a sense of certainty to the occurrence
of certain events as though they had already
come to pass. When we start on the first voy-
age to the Antipodes we believe that we shall
find the country for which we are bound, al-
though we have only the evidence of others to
rely upon. If we trust ourselves to cross some
new railway bridge, we have no assurance that
it will support the weight of the train, except
from our confidence in the engineer, and our
experience of the stability of similar undertak-
ings. Hence it is through faith, acting on the
commonest incidents of every-day life, that we
can draw the veil which hides the future, and
commit ourselves to the unknown with the
confidence of absolute knowledge.

Even this worldly type of faith finds expres-
sion in action, if not in words. And the out-
ward expression of the act of faith constitutes a
Creed. A man believes in the power of wealth
to secure happiness, and he strains every nerve
to secure it for himself. His definition of riches
and of the pleasure which they afford him, be-
comes his Creed. So it is with those who take
as their ultimate goal the spread of intellectual
culture, the promotion of philanthropic works,
or even secularism.

It is, however, in the spiritual arena of human
life that faith finds its highest development.
When, as we have seen, men daily and hourly
give evidence of moulding their lives on the
basis of an exercise of faith, there is nothing in-
consistent in applying the same test to our
knowledge of, and communion with, the
Supreme Being. The proof of the existence of
Australia, to the person who has never visited
it, is in no respect stronger or more convincing
than that which tells us that God lives. We
take each on trust, believing what men give us
as their experience. But in regard to the Divine
revelation, we have a far more substantial
foundation on which to build, because the spir-
itually-minded man or woman has, in addition
to the testimony of others, the personal convic-
tion of the undeniable communion with the in-
visible Father, through the medium of that
divinely-implemented instinct or personality which
we call the soul. The unbeliever, the evil-
liver, the irreligious, cannot penetrate the mys-
tery of this spiritual intercourse, any more than
the heathen soldiers and rulers were able to re-
cognise the identity of the risen Son of God.

But faith is none the less real because many
are so satiated with worldliness that they can-
not assimilate its quickening properties.

To quote once more the words of Bishop West-
cott, ‘Faith (i.e. religious faith), as applied to
our present life, is a principle of knowledge, a
principle of power, and a principle of action.’
It is through faith that we attain to a realisa-
tion of the glories of the Incarnation, the recon-
ciliation between the pure and Holy God and the
sin-stained mass of humanity; and to the certainty
of a future life by the power of Christ’s
Resurrection. It is through faith that men
have gone forth, single-handed, in jeopardy of
their lives—which they have again and again
laid down as an offering and a sacrifice for the
Gospel—to carry the message of pardon and
salvation by the Cross of Calvary to nations
sunk in barbarism and superstition. It is
through faith that the Church of Christ, in spite
of periods of apathy and neglect, has worked

and labored to promote the cause of her Master,
and to win souls to Him.

Hence, if we hold our faith strongly and with
conviction, we must be able to explain its
meaning to those who are outside the circle of
believers. It was the impetuous, the warm
hearted Apostle St. Peter who urged his disci-
ples to ‘be ready always to give an answer to
every man that asked them a reason of the
hope that was in them.’ This the Christian
must ever be prepared to do. The more real,
the more living, his faith in God is, the more
fervently and eagerly will he wish to proclaim
it to men. And a creed embodies both the per-
sonal belief of the individual, and the universal-
ity of that belief in reference to all the members
of Christ. We preface each clause of our pro-
fession of faith by the words ‘I believe’ (*Credo*),
because the Father demands of every disciple a
definite testimony of his state of religious con-
viction. At the same time, the fact that we
give utterance to this sentiment in face of the
congregation is a pledge of our fellowship with
the saints in and through our Lord and Saviour
Jesus Christ. In the Creeds used by the East-
ern branches of the Catholic Church, we find
the word of recitation in the plural, ‘We be-
lieve.’

The most usual name by which a Creed was
designated in the early Church is *symbolum*.
The word is first used in this sense by St. Cy-
prian. Various explanations of its meaning
have been given, but the most probable seems
to be that which regards the Creed as a watch-
word whereby Christians were known among
one another. The word ‘Canon’ (lit. *a straight
line*) is sometimes applied to the Creeds, thus
defining them as the rule or standard by which
to judge rightly of what ought to be believed.

It will be my aim, in the following articles,
to set forth in a simple and intelligible manner
the intricate historical events which contrib-
uted to the formation of the Creeds, with a brief
reference to the various heresies against which
they were directed. It must be remembered
that the original idea of a Creed was not that
of a public profession of faith before the con-
gregation. This practice was unknown in the
primitive Church. Then the converts were for
the most part persons of riper years, who were
repared, by a course of instruction, for their
admission into the Church by holy baptism.
The great seasons for baptism were Easter and
Pentecost. During their preparation they were
taught a Creed, but it was delivered to them by
word of mouth, and was to be carried in the
memory, and never written down. ‘This Sac-
rament of faith’ (another name for the Creed),
writes St. Cyprian, ‘is not to be profaned.’
And Peter Chrysologus, Archbishop of Raven-
na, writing about 450 A.D., uses the following
words: ‘Let the mind hold, and the memory
guard, this pledge of hope, this decree of salva-
tion, this symbol of life, this safeguard of faith,
lest vile paper depreciate the precious gift of
the Divinity, lest black ink obscure the mys-
tery of light, lest an unworthy and profane
hearer hold the secret of God.’ St. Augustine,
who lived about the same time, in a sermon
delivered to the catechumens (or candidates for
Holy Baptism), dwelt strongly on the same
thought, basing his injunctions to commit the
Creed to memory only, and not to paper, upon
the words of the writer of the Epistle to the
Hebrews, when he says: ‘This is the covenant
that I will make with them after those days,
saith the Lord, I will put My laws into their
hearts, and in their minds will I write them.’

The Creed, thus learnt during the weeks of
preparation, was publicly recited when the
convert was baptized, and then employed no
more in the Church services, but treasured as
the watchword of the Christian faith.

Let us now see what traces we can find in
Scripture of a ‘form of sound words.’

1. In the first place, we may take, as the
basis of all professions of the Christian faith,