

THE MERCERSBURG REVIEW.

JANUARY, 1867.

INTRODUCTORY ARTICLE.

The publication, which was from 1849 to 1852 the "Mercersburg Review," from 1853 to 1856 the "Mercersburg Quarterly," from 1857 to 1861 again the "Mercersburg Review," but which, under these changes of title, steadily maintained the same spirit and character, and which has been, during the last five years, suspended, is now again resumed. Its suspension was not owing to any loss of interest in the subjects to which its discussions had been devoted, but partly, if not wholly, to the pressure on all publishing interests brought on by the war for the Union, and was always designed to be but temporary.

The reasons which led to its origination are the reasons for its continuance. In resuming the old name, it proposes to lift the old banner. It adopts anew the language of the introductory article of the first number, January, 1849: "The Review is expected to bear a distinctive and peculiar character. As the mere echo of what already exists in this way, it would have no right to challenge any regard. It proposes to represent, in philosophy and religion, the system of thinking which has come to be identified extensively, in this country, with the Institutions at Mercersburg, though of far wider and higher force, in fact, on both sides of the Atlantic. With the same field of survey that is spread out to other Theological Reviews, the stand-point of its observations will be materially different. It

Finally, while this Review proposes to abate nothing of what is due to the scientific and classic form properly belonging to a Theological Review, it will endeavor, as far as possible, to meet and satisfy the needs of an intelligent, earnest, and inquiring laity.

ART. II.—THEOLOGY OF THE NEW LITURGY.

BY JOHN W. NEVIN, D.D.,

President of Franklin and Marshall, College, Lancaster, Pa.

The discussion on the Revised Liturgy, at the meeting of the late General Synod in Dayton, brought out clearly two things. It showed that the liturgical question, as it now has place among us in the Reformed Church, is in truth a doctrinal question of the deepest significance; and it showed also that as a doctrinal question it has to do, not with one or two points of theological opinion simply, but with theology in its universal view.

This accounts for the earnestness with which the Liturgy is opposed by those who have set themselves against it. To some it has no doubt appeared strange, that the book should have become an object of such strong jealousy and dislike. For by general confession now, we are a liturgical branch of the Church; we allow the propriety of prescribed forms of worship; we hold it part of our Reformed right to use them, or not to use them, as to our congregations severally may seem best. In conformity with this freedom, we have been willing to let liturgies take their course among us heretofore, with little or no attempt at anything like ecclesiastical supervision or restraint. Our ministers might use the old Palatinate Liturgy, or some irresponsible compilation handed down from the last century, or the Mayer Liturgy, or any other Liturgy they pleased; nobody felt called upon to interfere; all were willing to let ministers and people judge for themselves what sort of service might best answer their wants. But in the case of our new Liturgy, all this tolerant indifference has suddenly come

to an end. Even in its first imperfect form, as the Provisional Liturgy, the broad sanction of the Church, under which it appeared, was not sufficient to protect it from violent obloquy and assault. Pains were taken to create prejudice against it on all sides; it could not be introduced, it was said, among our people; and yet, strangely enough, its influence was deprecated with ominous apprehension, as likely to work mischief far and wide. As the Revised Liturgy, it is now relieved of its first defects, and brought into easy working form. But this has only drawn upon it more apprehensive jealousy, and more active opposition, than what it had to encounter before. Hence the onset made upon it at Dayton. That was the culmination of a movement, which looked to nothing less than the violent suppression of the new Order of Worship before it was fairly presented to the churches. The churches, it was still said, could never be brought to receive it; but it was held dangerous, now more than before, to give them the opportunity of deciding that point for themselves. Not only must the book not be formally allowed; it must be formally condemned and prohibited from use. The usual congregational liberty of the Reformed Church must here come to an end. For this Liturgy there could be no toleration. The opposition to it had grown virulent. It amounted to fanatical hatred.

To some, we say, all this may have seemed strange. But it is accounted for by the theological life of the new Order of Worship. Had the book been a mere pulpit Liturgy, a collection of dry forms for the use of the minister in the usual style of such mechanical helps, it would have called forth no such virulent opposition. But it was something altogether different from that. It carried with it the spirit and power of a true altar Liturgy; and in this character it was felt to involve, not simply a scheme of religious service, but a scheme also of religious thought and belief, materially at variance with preconceived opinion in certain quarters; the sense of which then became instinctively, where such opinion prevailed, a feeling of antagonism to the whole work. Thus at our late General Synod, the liturgical discussion proved to be, in fact, an earnest

theological discussion, the interest of which extended far beyond the particular denominational occasion that gave rise to it. It was remarkable, indeed, that the opponents of the new Liturgy seemed to lay comparatively little stress on the mere ritual points, to which at other times they have taken exception. The question of responses, for example, hardly came into the argument at all. Every other consideration was for the time swallowed up by the question of doctrine. And here, again, the special was evidently ruled by the general. It was not so much dissatisfaction with single doctrinal statements here and there in the Liturgy, as hostility rather to its whole doctrinal basis, that roused and led on the war for its destruction. The Liturgy represented one system of religious thought; the opposition to it represented another; the two constitutionally different, and mutually repellent. Hence the controversy.

On the floor of the Synod, this controversy was met by the friends of the Liturgy with overwhelming success. The charges brought against it were shown to be untenable and false. Its doctrinal orthodoxy was triumphantly sustained. In the nature of the case, at the same time, this defence rebounded into the form of an attack upon the orthodoxy of the opposite side. It was shown that the offence taken with the Liturgy resulted from want of sympathy with the true idea of the Gospel, as this is owned and set forth in the forms of the Liturgy; and that the party opposing it was itself, therefore, theologically unsound, as standing in the bosom of a system which, as far as it prevails, draws after it the rationalistic subversion of the Christian faith altogether. The real character of the system in this view, it may be added; cropped out actually, from time to time, in the speeches which were made from that side of the house; in a way that served, if not actually to horrify, at least very seriously to startle, the better sensibilities of many, who had been brought up to believe different things.

What we propose now, is to bring this momentous issue between the Liturgy and its enemies into wider public view.

Vast pains have been taken all along to disseminate doubts of its orthodoxy, and to create in this way a prejudice against it in the mind of the Church. Heretofore the way has not been open properly for meeting the loose, and always more or less indefinite charge. Now, however, the time seems to have come for laying aside all silence and reserve in regard to the subject. The theological character of the Liturgy has been challenged, in a style which makes it proper and necessary to confront the challenge. Our object in this article is immediately and primarily its defence; but all such defence, as we have just seen, is necessarily at the same time a polemical assault on the system of theological thinking, from which the challenge in question proceeds. Such is the nature of the issue here joined. If the opponents of the Liturgy are sound in their theological premises, the Liturgy of course must be considered theologically unsound; but if it should appear, that it is the Liturgy in fact which rests in sound premises, then we shall know with equal certainty, that the charge of unsoundness falls upon the other side. Our vindication in one direction, becomes thus, as a matter of course, crimination in another direction. We turn upon the theological enemies of the Liturgy their own charge. In the prosecution of our argument, we shall cause it to appear that they are themselves unevangelical, just where they call in question the evangelical character of the Liturgy. We shall be under the painful necessity of showing, that by their own concession, or in the way of unavoidable inference from their premises, they stand committed to views that are heretical in the worst sense of the term.

Let it be understood, however, that this accusation is not preferred against the adversaries of the Liturgy indiscriminately. We have limited the charge purposely to its *theological* enemies; that is, to those who, consciously or unconsciously, hate and oppose the system of theological belief, in whose bosom it stands, and from whose inspiration it draws its life and power. We would fain hope, that even among these there may be some, whose minds are not closed absolutely against

the truth, and who need only the help of some candid and dispassionate inquiry to be made sensible of the danger of following blindly the prejudices by which they are now led. Beyond the range of all such theological opposition, however, there is a large amount of disaffection felt toward the Liturgy at present, which rests upon other grounds altogether. It is the result of misrepresentations industriously circulated, of fears blindly awakened, of prejudices adroitly played upon by party address—all in profound ignorance, for the most part, of what the Liturgy actually is, and of what it proposes to do. With better information, much of this disaffection may be expected to disappear. The friends of the Liturgy, at all events, are very willing to have it put as widely as possible to this test. They only ask that it should be allowed to face all such popular prejudice on its own merits. Let the people have an opportunity to judge for themselves, whether it be suitable to their wants or not. We do not shrink from this tribunal, even in our present theological argument. On the contrary, we appeal to it without fear. It was said on the floor of Synod, indeed, by one who opposed the Liturgy, that its theology was of too deep a character to be intelligible to the people. As if the people, forsooth, could not find themselves properly in the Creed, the *Te Deum*, the Lord's Prayer, the Litany, the Ten Commandments, the Church Lessons and Collects, but only in the creations, extemporaneous or otherwise, let down upon them in the usual style from the modern pulpit. We have no such low opinion of the capacity of our laity. In the case before us, many of them at least have theological instincts, which are better and safer than all scholastic speculations; to say nothing of traditional beliefs, which no logic can set aside. To these instincts and beliefs we now make our confident appeal.

As already said, the doctrinal objections made to the Liturgy at particular points, refer themselves throughout to its general theology, the scheme or theory of Christianity, taken as a whole, in which its different parts are comprehended. A proper regard to order requires then, that we should direct our attention first to this general scheme. Only after the theology of

the Liturgy in such broad view has been vindicated, will the way be open for considering briefly the errors charged upon it in special instances.

What, now, is the reigning theology of the Liturgy? It is sometimes spoken of in this country as the Mercersburg Theology. But the system is far wider in fact than any such name; and no name of this sort besides can give us any true insight into its interior character and constitution. What we need here, is not a distinctive title for the theology in question, but a distinguishing apprehension of its nature. For our present purpose it may answer to characterize it descriptively, (without pretending to exhaust the subject), under a threefold view. In the first place, it is Christological, or more properly perhaps Christocentric; in the second place, it moves in the bosom of the Apostles' Creed; in the third place, it is Objective and Historical, involving thus the idea of the Church as a perennial article of faith. These three conceptions are closely intertwined; but they admit and deserve separate consideration.

CHRISTOCENTRIC THEOLOGY.

The term is sufficiently clear. It explains itself. We mean by it, of course, that the theology before us centres in Christ. He is not simply the author of its contents: these contents gather themselves up into Him ultimately as their root. As an object of faith and knowledge, and in the only form in which it can be regarded as having reality in the world, Christianity has been brought to pass through the mystery of the Incarnation, and stands perpetually in the presence and power of that fact. All its verities, all its doctrines, all its promises, all its life-giving forces, root themselves continually in the undying life of Him, who thus became man for us men and for our salvation. And such being the actual objective constitution of Christianity, it would seem to be at once plain that our apprehension of it, to be either right or safe, must move in the same order. It must plant itself boldly and broadly on the proposition, that Jesus Christ is the principle of Christianity, and that the full sense of the Gospel is to be reached only in and

through the revelation which is comprehended in His glorious Person. In doing this it will become necessarily such a theology, such a way of looking at the Christian salvation, as we are now trying to describe. Learned or unlearned, it will be a theology that revolves around Christ as a centre, and is irradiated at all points by the light that flows upon it from his presence.

For the right knowledge of things everywhere, all depends on their being surveyed from the right point of view. Facts and forms are not enough; they must be apprehended in their true relations; and this requires that the beholder should occupy, in regard to them, such a centre of observation as may enable him to see them in this way. Even an outward landscape, to be seen to advantage, must be seen from the proper position. So as regards any field or range of science. The astronomy of the old world, for example, abounded in observation and study; was furnished with vast material of phenomena and facts; accomplished much in the way of scientific comparison, induction, and generalization. But it labored throughout with embarrassment and confusion, because its scheme of the heavens was projected from a wrong standpoint. It made the earth to be the centre of the system to which it belongs, and studied the motions of the heavenly bodies exclusively from this false assumption. It was geocentric, as we say, in its contemplations, and therefore every where at fault. The Copernican system, in the fulness of time, redeemed the science, and made room for its modern triumphs; not primarily by the revelation of new facts, but by finding the true centre of observation for the apprehension of old facts. It planted its scientific lever in the sun, instead of the earth, bringing its studies thus into harmony with the objective order of the world it sought to understand and expound. Astronomy, in other words, ceased to be geocentric, and became heliocentric. Hence all its later enlargement and success.

Now what this heliocentric (sun-centre) standpoint is for the right study of the heavens in the science of astronomy, we affirm the Christocentric (Christ-centre) standpoint to be, for

the right study of heavenly and eternal things in the science of theology. No other standpoint can be substituted for it without boundless error and confusion. It is possible to bring in here a different centre of observation; nay, it is the natural vice of our fallen reason, that it tends continually to throw itself upon a different centre; for the full practical sense of what Christ is in this respect, belongs only to the world of faith, which as such is at the same time the world of what transcends all natural reason. We may have a simply anthropological divinity—a mere humanitarian theology; all centering in the idea of man (anthropocentric); the earth again ruling the heavens, and the merely moral or ethical, at best, playing itself off as the divine. Or we may have, on the other hand, a simply theological divinity—a construction of theology starting from the idea of God, considered absolutely and outside of Christ (theocentric); in which the relations of God to the world, then, will become pantheistic, fantastic, visionary, and unreal; and all religion will be made to resolve itself at last into metaphysical speculations or theosophic dreams. How far these false projections of Christian doctrine, in one view antagonistic, and yet in another everlastingly intermarried, have made themselves mischievously felt in the Christian world, through all Protean forms and shapes, from their first bad birth as Ebionism and Gnosticism, down to the Socinianism, Anabaptism, and metaphysical Calvinism of the sixteenth century, and down still farther to corresponding forms of religious thought in our own time—this is not the proper place to inquire. Our object is simply to fix attention on the possibility of such wrong constructions of Christianity, for the purpose of insisting with more effect on the necessity of a construction that shall start from the right point of observation; and to make fully apparent, moreover, how much is comprehended in what we say, when we affirm that this right point of observation is the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that no theology, therefore, can be either safe or sound, or truly Christian, which does not show itself to be in this view a truly Christocentric theology.

The proposition needs no proof. It is a first principle, a self-evident axiom, in Christianity. To doubt it, is to call Christ Himself into doubt. Has He not said: "I am the Light of the world"? Is it not His own voice that still rings through the ages from the isle of Patmos: "I am alpha and omega, the first and the last"? The natural world begins and ends in Him; for "all things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made" (John i. 3); and again we are told, "by Him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by Him, and for Him; and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist" (Col. i. 16, 17). The ethical world, the movement of humanity, the world of history as it may be called, begins and ends in Him; it is not chaotic, the sport of blind chance or iron fate; Christ is in it, causing all its powers and forces to converge throughout to what shall be found to be at last the world's last sense in the finished work of redemption. Finally, the world of revelation begins and ends in Him; it is not a number of independent utterances, properly speaking, given forth from God, but a single economy or system, through which God has made Himself known among men, with progressive manifestation, in the way, not of doctrine primarily and immediately, but of act and deed; the entire movement having its principle or root in Christ from the first, centering at last in the historical fact of the Incarnation, and running its course thence onward to the hour of His second appearing, when He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and admired in all them that believe. Jesus Christ is the alpha and omega of all these worlds (nature, history and grace), and as such the principle, centre and end, therefore, in which they all meet, and gather themselves together finally, as one (Eph. i. 10). This being so, where shall we find the key to a correct knowledge of the world, or of man, or of God, if not in that which is set before us as the first object of the Christian faith, the mysterious constitution of His blessed Person? Above all, what can we ex-

pect to know rightly in the sphere of revelation (among the facts of the Bible, and amid the "powers of the world to come" that are lodged in the Church), without the help of this key? The Old Testament throughout has no sure sense or force, except in the Christological view of its being a subordinate, relatively imperfect discipline or pedagogy, whereby the way was prepared for the coming of Christ in the flesh. It has no power to explain or interpret Christ, save only so far as it is itself made intelligible first in and through Christ. Then, as regards Christianity itself, strictly taken, what is it, we may well ask, in difference from all else pretending to call itself religion, if it be not the product and outgrowth of the new order of life, which first became actual in the world by the assumption of our human nature into union with the Divine Word (John i. 14, 17), having in this view its beginning, middle, and end in Christ, and in Christ only?

And how then, having such objective constitution, and standing thus actually and entirely in the historical being of Christ, beyond which it must necessarily resolve itself into nothing, as having no basis of faith whereon to rest; being in such sort bound to Christ, we repeat, as the alpha and omega, sum and substance of its whole existence, how possibly shall Christianity be studied and understood aright, either practically or doctrinally, either as a system of life, or as a system of theology, if it be not in the Christocentric way of which we are now speaking? To comprehend the "world which grace has made," we must take our position by faith in the great primordial centre, from which all has been evolved, and there fixing our spiritual telescope, endeavor, as best we may, to scan the wonders thus offered to our contemplation; being well assured that from any other centre, they will either not be seen at all, or else will be seen only under more or less distorted forms, and in more or less false relations and proportions. This centrality of Christ, in the Christian system, reaches forth to all parts of the system. Practically, all righteousness, all morality, all virtue, in the Christian sense, grow forth from the "law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus." All sound Christian feeling and experience,

flow from the sense of Christ formed in us as the hope of glory. And so intellectually also, Christ is our wisdom, the principle of all true Christian illumination and knowledge. Through Him only we are made to know man, his original destination, and the full extent of his fall. Through Him only, we come to have an insight into the true nature of sin, the power of the devil, the meaning of death, the idea of redemption, and the progress of the Christian salvation out to the resurrection of the last day. Through Him only, do we ever come to the true understanding of God, "in the knowledge of whom standeth our eternal life."

The theology now under consideration is decidedly of this character. It revolves around Christ. It has been strangely enough charged at times with subordinating the idea of Christ to the idea of the Church. But this is a gross mistake, if not a perverse slander. The theology in question does, indeed, lay stress on the doctrine of the Church, as stress is laid on it also in the Apostles' Creed; but only as the Church is held to be the necessary consequence of Christ (following the Creed in this also), and never as putting the Church in Christ's place. No theology in the country certainly has made more of Christ as the centre of its thinking and teaching. No theology has insisted more earnestly on the great cardinal truths of the Trinity, the Eternal Generation, the Divinity of the Son, the Incarnation, the Mediatorial Work and Reign of Christ; and no theology, it may be safely asserted, has done more, within the same time, to awaken and enforce attention to the practical significance of these truths in the American religious world.

This brings us to the consideration of what we have already named as its second distinguishing characteristic, namely; the fact, that it moves throughout in the bosom of the old Creeds, the original *regula fidei* of the Christian world.

RULED BY THE APOSTLES' CREED.

"It is not necessary to waste time here on the half-learned criticisms, we hear made continually, in certain quarters, on the title and origin of this symbol. We know that it was not com-

posed strictly by the Apostles; that it took form gradually; that there were different Creeds in the first centuries; and that among these, the formula used at Rome finally gained general credit in the fifth and sixth centuries, so as to become, for subsequent times, what is now denominated the Apostles' Creed. All this we know; but we know also, at the same time, that this final settlement upon the Roman form, involved no giving up or changing any where of a single point of faith; that the different Creeds previously, were only variations of one and the same confessional theme; that what was added to its utterance in any case, came in only as the explicit enunciation of what was included in it implicitly before; and that all in this way resolved itself into a common rule of faith, or canon of truth, which the universal Church held from the beginning as of Apostolic origin and Apostolic authority. In this character, the symbol has been received through all ages, by all branches of the Church, both Oriental and Occidental, as the primary and most fundamental expression of the Christian faith. Protestantism has claimed, from the beginning, to stand here on the same ground with Roman Catholicism. The Reformed Church, no less than the Lutheran, starts confessionally with the Apostles' Creed. Our own admirable Heidelberg Catechism, in particular, makes it, in form, the ground and rule of all it professes to teach in the way of faith.

The Apostles' Creed thus is the deepest, and for that reason most comprehensive of all Christian symbols. It lies at the foundation of all evangelical unity; it is the last basis and bond of comprehension in the conception of the Church. No sect refusing to stand on this basis, can have any right to claim footing in the Gospel, or fellowship with the Apostles.

All right theological thinking then, as well as all true evangelical believing, must start where this fundamental form of faith starts, and keep step with it at every point as far as it goes. The reason of this is plain. It lies in the constitution of the Creed; which is no summary of Christian doctrine primarily for the understanding, but the necessary form of the Gospel, as this is first apprehended by faith; a direct transcript,

we may say, of what the Gospel is to the contemplation of the believer, turned wholly upon the Person of Christ. Such faith is necessarily ruled by its object; the Creed, in other words, must be Christological, must unfold itself, first of all, in the order of what are to be regarded as the fundamental facts of Christianity, growing forth from the mystery of the Incarnation. In such view, there is no room to speak of two or more different methods of faith for taking in the sense of the Gospel. As there is but one method of the objective movement of the Gospel in Christ Himself, so can there be only one method for the apprehension of it on the part of believers. That method we have in the Apostles' Creed; and any attempt to set this aside, to substitute for it some different construction of first principles, or to subordinate its proper normative authority and signification to any later type of belief, must be looked upon at once as a serious falling away from the Gospel, and may be expected to result at last in the confusion and eclipse of faith altogether.

All this the theology before us owns and holds steadily in view. Starting in Christ, it follows the order in which the facts of religion unfold themselves with necessary connection from His Person. This order is for it not optional simply, but is felt to be inwardly bound to its own principle. It is the immanent logic of faith, determined by Him who is the central object of faith. It makes all the difference in the world in this view, whether a system of theological thought be cast in the type of doctrine that is set forth in the Creed, or constructed in some other way. To some it may seem comparatively indifferent, how the topics of religion are put together, if only the same topics nominally are made use of in the work; the form is of no account, they fancy; all depends upon the matter. But this imagination itself shows at once the wrong position of those who hold it, and is really nothing less than a vast theological blunder. The form here is in fact everything; the matter nothing, we may say, except as embraced in this form. It is a vain pretence, therefore, to say, that the authority of the Creed is sufficiently acknowledged, by allowing

it to be in substance a true, though defective, representation of the Gospel, and then going on to work up the material of it into some supposed better scheme of doctrine, projected from another standpoint altogether, and moving throughout in a totally different line of thought. No confession, no catechism, no preaching, no worship, no system of divinity, carried forward in this way, can ever breathe the spirit of the Creed, or have in it the true life of the Creed; however much it may try to make the world believe that it is at the bottom in harmony with the "undoubted articles of our Christian faith," as we have them set forth in this radical symbol.

Hence it is, that where such pretended reconstructions of the material of faith prevail, the honor shown to the Creed is in fact nominal only, and theoretic at best, and never practically real. We all know how completely the symbol has fallen out of use, in all those portions of the Church, in which such reconstructed divinity has come to have the upper hand. Evidence enough, what a difference it makes, whether our religion grow forth, or not, from this "form of sound words," delivered unto us from the Apostles. The difference reaches into all spheres of practical Christianity; into family religious training; into the Sunday-school; into the work of catechetical instruction; into the character of preaching; into all sanctuary services; into all devotional offices. In the same way it reaches to every point of doctrinal Christianity. There is not a Christian dogma, that is not affected by it in the most serious manner.

The theology of the Creed does not stop short, of course, with the few, primordial articles of that first, immediate panoramic vision of faith. Within the range of this regulative scheme, it finds room for any amount of scientific study and enlargement, through the use of what matter is offered to it for this end in God's Revelation, and in the exercise of a reason that is now purified for its office by the inspiration of God's Holy Spirit; the very element, as it were, of the world of faith in which the Gospel is here felt to move. But through all such enlargement, the organization of doctrine remains rooted and

grounded in the objective mystery of the new creation in Christ Jesus, as this has been first apprehended in the form of the Creed; and every doctrine is an outgrowth from this, having thus its position, complexion and quality in the system, both for faith and for knowledge, as it could not possibly have them in any other way. Every doctrine, in this way, becomes Christological, and serves to express a truth which is true only within the orbit of the Creed, and not at all on the outside of it.

It would be interesting to verify this in particular cases, by showing how the doctrine of the atonement, for example, the article of justification by faith, the idea of regeneration, the conception of sacramental grace, are found to be always something materially different in the theology of the Creed from what they are made to be in any other theology; but it would carry us too far for our present purpose, to pursue the subject in this way. We have said enough to show of what immense account the characteristic is, by which the theological system we are now defending is distinguished as being the theology of the Creed; and what a gulph of separation this necessarily involves, between it and all antagonistic theologies; which, however loud mouthed they may be in the use of cant evangelical shibboleths, stand convicted, nevertheless, of being profoundly unevangelical, just because they show themselves wanting in every sort of genuine sympathy and loyalty for the Apostles' Creed, through which the original voice of the Gospel has come sounding down upon us from the earliest times.

The theology we are defending may be said to be specially identified with the honor of the Apostles' Creed, in the religious history of this country. In our Reformed Zion, twenty-five years ago, the Creed had become almost a dead letter. It still kept its place in the Heidelberg Catechism; but that itself was in a fair way to have its life smothered out of it, by the incubus which had come to settle upon it in the form of Methodistic Puritanism; and for the fundamental significance of the gem it here held enshrined in its bosom, there appeared to be but small sense anywhere. The Creed was not heard commonly in our pulpits, and had fallen into neglect largely in our families.

Now, however, all is changed. The voice of the old symbol is once more restored. Our children are familiar with it. Along with the Lord's Prayer, it has forced itself into general liturgical use among us, even where the new Liturgy is still feared for the theological spirit that has wrought such auspicious change.

For can there be any doubt of the source from which this great change has sprung? Do we not owe it entirely to the Christological tendency, that has been at work among us for the last twenty years; which was so much assisted in its own development by the study of the Creed; and which at the same time wrought effectually to restore this to popular confidence and use?

And no one, who has observed attentively the course of things, can doubt, but that the power of this testimony has been felt, also, far beyond the narrow limits of our Reformed Church. There is a deplorable want of real sympathy still with this archetypal form of sound words, on all sides; but, a reactionary feeling has begun to set in evidently in its favor. It would be hard probably to find now, even in Puritan New England itself, any respectable so called Orthodox voice, prepared to say, as the pious "Puritan Recorder" could venture to do in 1849, that the Apostles' Creed has become, for the orthodoxy of New England, a "fossil relic of by gone ages"—a dead formulary, which "teaches in several respects anti-scriptural doctrines," so that it must be pitiful, therefore, to think of "infusing life into it, and setting it up again as a living ruler in the Church." A change, we say, has begun to come over the spirit of that dream; and our theology unquestionably has had something at least to do with bringing it about. No other theology in the country, certainly, has labored more to re-animate the symbol with its pristine life. No other has so borne it on high as the chosen banner of its faith. And we will add also in good trust, of no other is there more room to say, *In hoc signo vinces*.

OBJECTIVE AND HISTORICAL.

Starting in the great fact of the Incarnation, and following its movement, our theology has finally the third general character of being Objective and Historical. In other words, it is not a system simply of subjective notions, a metaphysical theory of God and religion born only of the human mind, a supposed apprehension of supernatural verities brought into the mind in the way of abstract thought; but it is the apprehension of the supernatural by faith under the form of an actual Divine manifestation in and through Christ, which, as such, rules and governs the power that perceives it, while it is felt also to be joined in its own order to the natural history of the world onward through all time. So much lies at once in the Apostles' Creed.

All revelation is primarily something that God does—an objective, supernatural manifestation, which causes His presence to be felt in the world. The right apprehension of what is thus exhibited, which can be only through the inspiration of His Spirit, becomes then the power of His word in the souls of those to whom it is addressed. Universally, it would seem, the inward illumination is bound to the outward manifestation in this way. God does not speak to the souls of men immediately and abruptly, as enthusiasts and fanatics fondly dream; that would be magic, and gives us the Pagan idea of religion, not the Christian. The order of all true supernatural teaching is, the objective first, and the subjective or experimental afterwards, as something brought to pass only by its means. Most of all, we may say, is this true of Christianity, the absolute end of all God's acts of revelation. Its whole significance is comprehended, first of all, in the Divine deed, whereby God manifested Himself in the flesh, through the mystery of the Incarnation. This objective act is itself the Gospel, in the profoundest sense of the term. In the very nature of the case, it must underlie and condition all that the Gospel can ever become for men, in the way of inward experience. True, it cannot save men without their being brought to experience its power; on which account it is, that we need to be placed in

communication with it through faith; but the power that saves is not, for this reason, in our experience or faith; it is wholly in the object with which our faith is concerned. The subjective here, sundered from the objective, can give us at best only a spurious evangelicalism, which will always be found, in the end, to be more nearly allied to the flesh than to God's Spirit.

Apprehended under such objective view, the revelation which God has been pleased to make of Himself through Jesus Christ (not in the way of oracle but of act), becomes necessarily, for our faith, at the same time historical. Only so can it be felt to be real, and not simply notional and visionary. Its objectivity itself implies, that it has entered permanently into the stream of the world's life, not just as the memory of a past wonder, but as the continued working of the power it carried with it in the beginning. The Gospel is supernatural; but it is the supernatural joined in a new order of existence to the natural; and this, it can be only in the form of history. In any other form, it becomes shadowy and unreal. Sense for the objective in Christianity, leads thus universally to sense for the historical; while those who make all of subjectivity are sure to be unhistorical.

The historical character of the Gospel, objectively considered, meets us, first of all, in the Person and Work of Christ Himself, as they are exhibited to us in the Creed. Its articles are not so many theological propositions loosely thrown together, but phases that mark the progress of what may be considered the dramatic development of His Mediatorial Life, out to its last consequence in the full salvation of His people. This, of itself, however, involves then, in the next place, as we may at once see, the historical character of Christianity also, regarded as the carrying out of this mystery of godliness among men to the end of time. Not only the subjective religious experiences and opinions of men here are to be regarded as entering into the general flow of history, like their political or scientific judgments, but the objective reality, from which Christianity springs, the new order of existence which was constituted for the world by the great fact of the Incarnation, must be allowed also to be historical. Only in such view can we possibly retain

our hold on the objectively supernatural, as it entered into the original constitution of the Gospel. It is not enough for this purpose, to have memories only of what was once such a real presence in the world. It lies in the very conception of the Gospel, in this objective view, that its supernatural economy should be of perennial force, that its resources and powers of salvation should be "once for all;" not in the sense of something concluded and left behind, as many seem to imagine, but in the sense of what, having once entered into the life of the world, has become so incorporated with it as to be part of its historical being to the end of time.

But this conception of a supernatural economy having place among men under an objective, historical form, an order of grace flowing from Christ, and altogether different from the order of nature, is nothing more nor less than the idea of the Holy Catholic Church as we have it in the Creed. We can see thus how it is, that this article holds the place assigned to it in that symbol. It is not there by accident or caprice. It is there as part of the faith, which is required to take in the objective, historical movement of the grace that is comprehended in our Lord Jesus Christ; and it meets us exactly at the right point, as setting forth the form and manner in which Christ, by the Holy Ghost, carries forward His work of salvation in the world. If we are to hold fast the objective, historical character of what this work was first, and still continues to be, in His own Person, it cannot be allowed to lose itself in the agency of the Spirit under a general view; it must, necessarily, involve for us the conception of a special sphere; this likewise objective and historical; within which only (and not in the world at large), the Holy Ghost of the Gospel is to be regarded as working. This is the Church. It comes in just here as a necessary postulate of the Christian faith. Standing in the bosom of the Creed, we cannot get round it. It is a mystery, like all the other articles of the symbol, which we are required to believe, because it flows with necessary derivation from the coming of Christ in the flesh. Our belief in it is not founded in our empirical knowledge of it, our having come to be sure of its ex-

istence and attributes in some other way. In that case it would not be faith at all in the sense of the Creed. What faith has to do with properly, here as elsewhere, is the supernatural belonging to its object; and that comes to us, not in the way of natural experience and observation, but only in the way of a *a priori* challenge and demand addressed to us directly from its own sphere. We do not believe, as the old adage has it, because we understand, but we believe in order that we may understand. Where there is no faith of this sort in the Church, going before all inquiries in regard to what it is and where it is for outward view, it is not to be expected that these inquiries can be carried forward with much earnestness or effect. We may not be able to explain fully the meaning of our Saviour's descent to hades, or the time and manner of His second advent; but that is no reason why these articles should not be firm objects of our faith; we believe them, because they are felt to be involved in the objective movement of the Gospel itself in Christ's Person. And just so we believe the Church. We cannot get along without it, in our conception of the real, objective, historical working of Christ's Mediatorial Life in the world. This must, to be real at all, have a sphere of its own; which, as such, becomes, then, an order or constitution of grace, in distinction from the world in its simply natural constitution; exactly what we mean by the Church as an article of faith, back of all questions in regard to its outward organization and form. We cannot get along without it, we say, in the objective movement of the Creed. Do away with it, as modern spiritualists require, and this movement is, for our faith, brought suddenly to an end. It is either sublimated into magic, or precipitated at once into the order of mere nature.

The theology we are speaking of, then, is churchly. It believes in the Church, as we have the article in the Apostles' Creed; believes in it as a mystery, which comes in necessarily just where it stands in the Creed, as part of the ongoing movement of the general mystery of salvation, that starts in the Incarnation. It believes in an economy of grace, a sphere of supernatural powers and forces flowing from the historical fact of

Christ's birth, death, and glorification, which are themselves present in the world historically (not magically), in broad distinction from the economy of nature; and in the bosom of which only, not on the outside of it, the Gospel can be expected to work as the wisdom of God and the power of God unto salvation. So far as this goes, of course, it owns and confesses that the Church is a medium of communication between Christ and His people. They must be in the order of His grace, in the sphere where this objective working of His grace is actually going forward, and not in the order of nature, where it is not going forward at all (but where Satan reigns and has his own way), if the work of redemption and sanctification is to be carried forward in them with full effect. In this sense, most assuredly, salvation is of the Church, and not of the world; and to look for it in the world, by private spiritualistic negotiations with God, professedly and purposely pouring contempt on the idea of all church intervention, is to look for it where it is not to be found.

This, of course, means a great deal; and draws after it, in the way of necessary consequence, much that we cannot now think of noticing in detail. A churchly theology can never run in the same direction with a theology that is unchurchly; and can never breathe the same spirit. Not because it makes less of Christ, as this last is ever ready to charge; but because it makes more of Christ, and cannot consent to have Him turned into a Gnostic phantom. Not because it is less evangelical, as the unchurchly spirit, with great self-complacency, is forever prompt to assume; but because it rests in a more profound and comprehensive apprehension of the Gospel.

Such a churchly theology, we feel at once, can never be otherwise than sacramental. Where the idea of the Church has come to make itself felt in the way now described, as involving the conjunction of the supernatural and the natural continuously in one and the same abiding economy of grace, its sacraments cannot possibly be regarded as outward signs only of what they represent. They become, for faith, seals also of the actual realities themselves, which they exhibit; mysteries, in which the visible and the invisible are bound together

by the power of the Holy Ghost (not physically or locally, as vain talkers will forever have it), in such sort, that the presence of the one is, in truth, the presence of the other.

In the end, also, unquestionably, the sacramental feeling here cannot fail to show itself a liturgical feeling. There is an inward connection between all the forms of religious thinking we have had thus far under consideration. They run into one another, and require one another to be in any sense, complete. A theology which is truly Christocentric, must follow the Creed, must be objective, must be historical; with this, must be churchly; and with this again, must be sacramental and liturgical. It must be liturgical, moreover, in a sense agreeing with these affinities throughout—the only sense, in fact, in which it is not absurd to talk of worship in this form. It can never be satisfied with anything less than an altar liturgy. A mere pulpit liturgy, a hand-book of forms for the exclusive use of the minister, must ever seem to it, in comparison, something very unrefreshing, not to say miserably cold and dry.

The enemies of the new Liturgy are right, then, in saying, that it is the product of the general scheme of theology we have now tried to characterize and describe, and that the spirit of this theology pervades, more or less, all its offices and forms. For this reason it is, in truth, that they dislike it, and would be glad to get it out of the way. Standing, as they do, in another order of religious thought altogether, they feel that the Liturgy is against them, and their instinct of self-preservation, as it were, impels them to seek its destruction. In this way, our liturgical controversy is, in reality, a great theological controversy; one that should be of interest to other Protestant Churches, no less than to our own. We see in it two general schemes of theology; two different versions, we may say, of the meaning of Christianity; two Gospels, in fact, arrayed against one another, with the feeling on both sides, that if one be true the other must necessarily be wrong and false. One of these schemes is the theology we have been thus far trying to describe; the other is the opposite of this, the Puritanic un-

churchly scheme, we may call it, in which the enemies of the Liturgy now openly stand.

ANTI-LITURGICAL THEOLOGY.

And what, now, is this Puritanic scheme? It admits within it different constructions, Calvinistic, Arminian, Methodist, Baptist, and so on in all manner of sect forms; but what we are concerned with here is only its general character, the underlying common basis of these distinctions, as this presents itself to our view in broad contrast with the general character of the scheme we have just been considering. And even this general view must be taken at present in a very cursory, wholesale way. It will be sufficient, however, we trust, to show all unprejudiced persons, whose image and superscription the system in question bears, and in the service of what cause it works.

What, we ask again, is this Puritanic scheme, which finds a "serpent" in the new Liturgy, and sees in it only a poisoned chalice offered to the lips of the people? We will now answer.

It is a scheme, which betrays itself at once by its apostacy from the primitive *regula fidei* of the Christian Church, the Apostles' Creed. We know how it is ready at times, especially in our German Churches, to squirm under this charge, and how, like some slimy eel, it tries to slip from beneath it with every sort of disingenuous evasion. But we mean now to hold it tightly to the accusation; and to do this before the people (the elders especially and laity in general of the Reformed Church), so that all may be able to see and know just what this false popular evangelicalism means, and in what direction it leads. It is constitutionally and inwardly at war with the Creed. It cannot frame its mouth to pronounce the symbol in its true original sense; but claims the right of putting into its articles, where it may please, a better modern sense of its own.

Hear, on this point, the "Puritan Recorder," in 1849. The Puritans, it says, receive the Creed "in a sense consonant with their theology," either leaving out altogether, for example, the article of the descent to hades, or putting upon it a constrained meaning to suit themselves. "But it is neither safe nor expe-

dient," the Recorder honestly adds, "to receive such a document in such a perverted sense; for the document once being admitted, and its authority being made to bind the conscience, then the way is open for those who hold the errors held by its authors, to plead that we are bound to receive it in the sense which its authors gave to it, and this makes it an instrument of corrupting the faith of the Gospel." Honest confession! True divination! The voice of the Creed allowed to proclaim itself from week to week, without note or comment, in the churches of New England, would, in the course of a few years, we verily believe, sap the foundations of their existing orthodoxy, and turn the stream of their church life into a wholly new channel. But any such use of the Creed among them now would be cried down as a Romanizing tendency or a hankering after ritualism; as it would be also still, in spite of the little reactionary movement we see working here and there the other way, in all branches of American Presbyterianism. In these ecclesiastical regions, Puritanism has killed the Apostles' Creed out of all practical and theological use. It has become for them a dead letter, in family and school, in the pulpit and in the divinity hall. Let the thoughtful, everywhere, consider well what this means. We speak plainly, because the fact is plain.

In our Reformed Church, especially since the theological revival we have had among us these last years, no tongue would dare to wag itself against the Creed in the fashion of the "Puritan Recorder." With us now at least, the symbol is no dead letter, but a living witness of Apostolical truth. So our people are coming to regard it more and more. But the Puritanic spirit is still among us to a certain extent; and as far as it is so, it remains true still, in jesuitical disguise, to the outspoken confession of the Recorder, that the Creed can be mouthed by modern evangelicalism only in a galvanized, so-called non-natural sense.

Were we not told as much as this, to all intents and purposes, on the floor of the late General Synod, at Dayton? Was not the ground there taken by the enemies of the Liturgy, that we had nothing to do with the faith of the third and fourth

centuries, the birth-period of the Creed in its full development, as we now have it; that the faith of that time is not to be considered normative or regulative, in any sense, for the faith of the modern Christian world; that the only primitive faith we are to follow, is what we can get out of the Bible directly for ourselves (every man thus following his own nose), without regard at all to any such objective form of sound words as we find employed to set forth the fundamental belief of Christendom in the first ages? This, of course, was a blow struck at *all* confessionalism; bringing down our Reformed platform, at one stroke, to a flat level with the lowest forms of sectarian subjectivity, and involving us with general confusion in the brotherhood of Anabaptists, Socinians, Quakers, Muggletonians, United Brethren, Winebrennerians, Mormons (for these, too, prate of the Bible in the same Cambyse vein), and others, out to the end of the chapter. Hence, we had, in part, a change of base; the authority of the Creed insidiously assailed from the authority of the Heidelberg Catechism; the faith of the Primitive Church required to shape itself here into conformity with what was represented to be the faith of the sixteenth century. A modern confessionalism in this way made to rule out the sense of the older confessionalism, in which, nevertheless, it professed to have its own root and ground! Did we not hear this nonsense gravely held forth at Synod? Were we not told there, that we are to take the Creed only in the sense of the fathers of the sixteenth century, and not in the sense of the fathers who first used it in the second and third centuries, if this last sense should be found not to square exactly with the sixteenth-century sense, as it was quietly granted might be the case? On the supposition, in other words, of even a casual discrepancy anywhere between the Creed and the Heidelberg Catechism, it was held that the sense of the Catechism must rule, that is, literally coerce, the sense of the Creed; in such way, that the modern symbol shall be held to be of primary normative force, and the primitive œcumenical symbol of only secondary derivative force as taken up into its bosom. How superlatively absurd! What plainer proof could

we have of hostility to the Creed, than the cloven foot thus unceremoniously thrust upon our view? Cannot the people see it everywhere with their own eyes? The matter may be put into a nutshell. Either the Creed, in its original unsophisticated sense, is what the Universal Church in past ages held it to be; the one only true radix and ground type of Christian faith and doctrine; or else it is not this, but a bastard corruption of the Gospel, requiring to be tinkered into new sense at least, if not new form, before it can pass muster as fairly evangelical, in the modern party sense of this much-abused term. These are the two alternatives, without the possibility of any middle ground for even a rope-dancer to stand upon. Where *they* stand, whose acrobatic performances with the subject at Synod have just been noticed, needs no demonstration. They do not own the Creed, in its own proper historical sense, for the original, necessary, and radically sure norm of our Reformed faith; but take it only, in the way the "Puritan Recorder" took it in 1849, as being, "*most of it*, capable of a sense which harmonizes with the Scriptures," going on then to rectify it to their taste, by distilling into it their own fancies, or what they are pleased to consider the elixir of sound thinking drawn from some other quarter. That is, in plain English, the Creed is *not* for them the ultimate symbolical authority of the Reformed Church; and the fathers of the sixteenth century must be regarded as saying what was not true, when they pretended to look upon it in that light. These modern sons of theirs know better now, and have changed all that.

But what now have our people, as a body, to say to the issue, thus fairly made up and brought before them? Will they allow their first symbol, the marrow and kernel of their confessional faith, to be ruthlessly torn from their grasp by this Puritanic enemy, which has stolen in upon us while men slept, and now threatens to rob us of all that is fairest in our theology or church life? Are we to hold on to the Apostles' Creed with good faith, taking it in its own true sense; or shall we have in place of it only a dead corpse of the Creed, eviscerated of its own true sense, and hypocritically hold this up as an argument

of our fealty to the ancient symbol? Are these old primeval articles, this grand architectonic scheme of the everlasting Gospel, to be for us no longer of undoubted catholic or universal authority, as the whole is declared to be in the Heidelberg Catechism? Will the Reformed Church recognize the voice of her true teachers, in those who counsel, directly or indirectly, any such falling away from the faith of the fathers? The appeal is to the people. Let the people answer.

But we are not done yet with this anti-liturgical theology. Its opposition to the Creed shows, of course, a constitutional difference between it and the whole conception of the Gospel contained in this ancient symbol; and from what we have seen already of this, we need have no difficulty in apprehending wherein the difference consists, and to what it amounts. The difference lies just here, and we wish all to ponder and consider it well: The Gospel of the Creed is, throughout, Christological, concentrates itself in Christ, throws itself, in full, upon the Incarnation, and sees in the objective movement of this Mystery of Godliness, as St. Paul calls it, the whole process of grace and salvation on to the resurrection of the dead and the life everlasting; while this other scheme, which we now call, for distinction's sake, the Gospel of Puritanism, substitutes for all this a construction of Christianity that is purely subjective, centering in the human mind, and that gives us then notions for facts, causing metaphysical abstractions to stand for the proper objects of faith, and thus resolves all religion finally into sheer spiritualism; in which no account is made of any objective mediation of grace outside of men, but every man is supposed to come directly, face to face, with God, having, in his evangelical notions simply, whatever is necessary to give him free access to the Divine presence.

The charge of not preaching Christ, we know, is one which this theology will be ready to resent on all sides, as the last that should be seriously preferred against it. It is accustomed to please itself with the imagination of being evangelical, for the very reason that it pretends to make everything of Christ and Him crucified, and in certain of its phases at least is for-

ever ringing changes on the themes of righteousness and free redemption through His name. Is not this the very boast of our unchurchly sects, all the land over, that *they* preach Christ, and Christianity, in opposition to such as lay stress on the idea of the Church, on the sacraments, on outward forms in any view; denouncing every intervention of this sort, as externalism, ecclesiasticism, sacerdotalism, ritualism, or something equally bad, that serves only to obscure the Saviour's glory, and to block up the way to His presence? Who in the world do preach Christ, it may be asked, if it be not these sects, for whom Christ is thus, nominally, all in all?

This we understand. It is an old song; as old as the Gnostics and the Phrygian Montanists, in the days of Tertullian. But we are not to be deceived by it for a moment. Try the spirits, says St. John; do not take them at their own word; try them whether they be of God. And he gives us a simple criterion for the purpose, applicable to all times (1 John iv: 1-3). They come preaching Christ of course. How else could they claim to be Christian? But what sort of a Christ is it that they preach? Is it the historical Christ of the Incarnation. Do they confess that "Jesus Christ is come in the flesh," not in appearance only, and not for a season only, but in full reality and for all time? Or is their confession of that spiritualistic sort, that resolves His coming in the flesh into a mere speculative dream, long since sublimated in the clouds? In this last case, St. John tells us, its boasting of Christ cannot save it. It is not of God, but is the very spirit of Anti-Christ, just because it sets up a Christ which is the creature of its own subjective thinking, over against and in place of the only true objective and historical Christ of the Gospel, "who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen."

We are not to be put off here with words. Neither can we mince matters in so momentous a case. We reiterate our charge. The theology we are dragging into the light does not preach Christ, as the alpha and omega of the new creation, the beginning, middle, and end of the Gospel. It cannot stand the searching test of St. John. The Christ it talks about is not

the Christ of the Incarnation, as He is made to pass before us in the sublime vision of the old Apostles' Creed; as we hear Him proclaimed (Jesus and the Resurrection and the Second Advent), by St. Peter and St. Paul, in the Acts of the Apostles; as we seem to see Him in the midst of the golden candlesticks, looking forth upon us serenely and grandly from the ecclesiastical literature of the first Christian ages. Not this, verily; as too many of us, alas, have been made painfully to feel; but another form and visage altogether; an object of thought rather than of faith, in looking to which we find that we have at last little more than our own thought to work with; and become like those that feed on wind, in trying to replenish our souls with spiritualities which our souls have themselves produced, instead of the true bread which cometh down from heaven and alone giveth life unto the world.

This is the great constitutional defect of the theology we are sitting in judgment upon; a defect which any jury of plain Christian men can understand; and it is easy to see, to what consequences, in the end, it must necessarily lead. Where the Gospel is not apprehended as the historical, enduring, objective Manifestation of God in the flesh, there can be no steady apprehension of that which constitutes the proper mystery of it in this view, namely, the union there is in it of the supernatural with the natural in an abiding, historical (not magical) form. This precisely is the true object of all evangelical faith, in the New Testament sense; the objective power of salvation, through the apprehension of which only, faith becomes justifying and saving faith. Instead of this, we shall have the supernatural resolved into a spiritualistic presence, seated in the Holy Ghost, and made to reach into the minds of men directly from heaven, in no organic conjunction whatever with the Incarnation; this being considered as, at best, the outward occasion only, and in no sense the inward medium, of the communication. In which case again, what is called justifying faith is no longer tied to the objective Gospel (without which, however, it cannot be *faith* at all), but hugs simply the Gospel of this subjective assurance a man may have of God's mercy in

his own mind, becoming thus, in fact, justification by fancy or feeling. But with the real supernatural of the Gospel metamorphosed in this way into the general notion of the supernatural in a metaphysical view, the whole conception of Christianity, in fact, sinks into the order of nature. The sense of what it is as a continuous constitution of grace, the historical presence of new heavenly powers, through the Spirit in the world, is gone. As with the Gnostics of old, the spiritual has lost all concrete, objective union with the natural. The bond between them has thinned itself into airy speculation. The system has become, in one word, essentially rationalistic. The virus of unbelief is in its veins; and it has no longer power to understand or appreciate fully, at a single point, the Mystery of Godliness, as it was seen of angels, preached to the nations, and believed on in the world, at the beginning.

Hence, the trouble this unhistorical Christianity has everywhere, with whatever comes before it as an assertion of objective grace in the institutions of the Gospel. What is exhibited as thus transcending the order of life in its natural character, is set down at once for superstition. It is, of course, then, unchurchly. A Church in the sense of the Creed—the organ through which Christ works in the world (His body), the medium of His presence among men, the home of His Spirit, the sphere of His grace—is for it no object of faith whatever, but an object rather of instinctive abhorrence and scorn. The office of the ministry flows in its view, not really, but only metaphorically, from Christ's Ascension Gift (Eph. iv: 8–12). Ordination is no investiture with a supernatural commission, proceeding from the Holy Ghost. Apostolical succession, in the case, is an idle dream. Sacraments, as such, are held to be a Romanizing abomination. For the spirit in question, the sacramental in truth, wherever it comes in its way, is a very Ithuriel's spear, the bare touch of which is enough to start it into its real shape, and make it appear the low rationalistic spirit which it is in fact. Sacraments are for it signs only of grace absent, and in no proper sense seals of grace present.

That such a theology as this should have no sympathy with

the true idea of worship in its liturgical form, results, as all can see, from its very constitution; and that it should be found arrayed now against our new Liturgy, is nothing more than what was to be expected. The conflict in the case, as already said, is a conflict of theological systems; not a controversy about a few responses, and a few outward forms (as the ridiculous fuss made in certain quarters about *Ritualism* in the German Reformed Church might seem to imply), but a controversy about doctrines and articles of faith, that strikes far beyond the German Reformed Church into the life of the entire Evangelical Protestantism of this land.

So much for the subject in its general view. The two opposing schemes of divinity are before us in a contrasted form, which even plain people, it is trusted, may be able to understand; if not with full scientific insight always at every point, yet with the insight, at least, of sound theological feeling, which is something far better. It remains now to notice briefly the theological objections made to the Liturgy at certain particular points. They will be found to resolve themselves at once into the general issue, between the two systems which have been thus far compared; and with this in view, it will be very easy to see to what they amount.

PARTICULAR OBJECTIONS.

I. It has been objected at times to the *Ordination Service* (though we heard little of this at Dayton), that it makes too much of the derivation of the office of the Ministry, by historical succession from Christ, and goes too far especially in saying, as it does p. 220, that the gift and grace of the Holy Ghost are to be looked for through the laying on of hands, for the fulfilment of its heavenly commission.

But here the question at bottom is simply, whether the Church is to be regarded at all, or not, as an objective, historical, more than merely natural constitution, carrying in itself powers and functions for its own ends, which are peculiar to itself, and not to be found anywhere else. Is it after all only

like a Temperance Society or a Political Party? What business has it then among the faith mysteries of the Creed?

In the view of the Liturgy, the Church is an organization, as the Creed makes it to be, which is not simply human, but is, at the same time, also, superhuman, in virtue of its organic out-flow from the fountain head of all grace and truth in the world, the union of the divine and human in the Person of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, through the mystery of the Incarnation. The organization being such, must not its organs and functions be of a corresponding character? Is the Liturgy wrong in declaring the office of the ministry to be "of divine origin, and of truly supernatural character and force, flowing directly from the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, as the fruit of His resurrection and triumphant ascension into heaven?" Is not this precisely what St. Paul teaches us, in the notable fourth chapter of his Epistle to the Ephesians? May the office come to any one, then, except from Christ, and through the order He has Himself established for handing it down in the Church? "The solemnity of ordination, then, through which this transmission flows," we are justified surely in saying with the Liturgy, "is not merely an impressive ceremony, by which the right of such as are called of God to the ministry, is owned and confessed by the Church; but it is to be considered rather as their actual investiture with the very power of the office itself, the sacramental seal of their heavenly commission, and a symbolical assurance from on high, that their consecration to the service of Christ is accepted, and that the Holy Ghost will most certainly be with them in the faithful discharge of their official duties."

Do we doubt this? Does it come as a strange, mystical, dangerously hierarchical doctrine to our ears? Then must we question, to the same extent, the reality of any such order of grace in the world, as we profess to believe every time we repeat the Creed. Ordination is a mere sham, indeed, if it be not the conveyance of power and right to exercise functions appertaining to the realm or jurisdiction in which it has place, as really as the commission of the civil magistrate is for him

an investiture with qualification he would not otherwise possess, to act in the name of the government he represents. The commission in either case must have quality and force answerable to the order of authority it proceeds from; and this being more than simply human and terrestrial in the case of the Gospel, it follows that the commission here must carry with it corresponding celestial character. Such being the case, it is only part of the faith which properly belongs to the transaction, when ordination is held to be the channel of supernatural official endowment for the work of the ministry; and nothing can be more proper than that the candidate, having made good confession of his general faith previously, should have the question put to him finally: "Are you truly persuaded in your heart, that you are called of God to the office of the holy ministry, and do you desire and expect to receive, through the laying on of our hands, the gift and grace of the Holy Ghost, which shall enable you to fulfil this heavenly commission and trust?"

It goes hard with the spiritualistic system, we know, to admit anything that looks to the real presence of the supernatural in this matter of fact way. The idea of grace tied to any outward occasion as such, the Holy Ghost bound to ordinances, is for it something heterogeneous with its ordinary conception of religion as an affair of purely subjective experience. It is felt to smack of mummery and superstition. Here, especially, comes in the bugbear of priestly manipulation and tactical succession, so easy to be sneered at by the frivolous. But what mummery must it not be, in fact, to go through a form of this sort, without any belief in the reality of what it pretends to be? To insist, that, while it seems to mean much, it means in truth in itself just nothing, and is only the sign of something altogether out of and beyond itself? If ordination be more than the powwowing of Pagan superstition, it *must* involve a real clothing with office in Christ's kingdom; and this can come only from Himself through the Holy Ghost. Does the candidate believe that, and look for it, in the transaction? Do those who lay hands on Him expect it, and mean it in their own

minds? If not, what business have they to be mocking high heaven with their dumb show in this way?

II. *Confession and Absolution.* Exception is taken to the form in the Liturgy, by which the minister is directed, after the General Confession, to assure such as are truly penitent, that their sins are pardoned for Christ's sake (p. 10). It breathes, we are told, an odor of sacerdotalism; and serves to break the direct, immediate relation that should hold in the case between the believer and his Lord.

Now, looking at the form itself, its terms certainly would seem to be safe enough in this view even for the most fastidious Puritanic judgment. For they only say, in fact, what any one may say, and what all are bound to believe, of God's grace toward the penitent through the Gospel. "Unto as many of you, beloved brethren," the form runs, "as truly repent of your sins, and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, with full purpose of new obedience,"—to such and no others—"I announce and declare, by the authority and in the name of Christ"—not by my own or any other authority—"that your sins are forgiven in heaven, according to His Gospel, through the perfect merit of Jesus Christ our Lord." Is there more in this at any time, than the declaration of what is at all times and in all places true? Does it imply that the minister himself pretends to forgive sins? Does it not, in the strongest manner, say just the opposite? What better is it then than spiritualistic prudery of the most captious sort, to put on a show of being scandalized with it in any such view?

But there is more in the matter than this. The offence taken is, after all, with what lies deeper than the form. It is the instinctive working as before of the unchurchly spirit, against what is felt to come in its way here as the mediation of Divine favor through the Church. God only can forgive sins, it says with the Pharisees of old; from Him only, therefore, can we have the blessing in a direct spiritual way—His spirit touching our spirit, without any intervening medium; to conceive of any such instrumentation of His grace *on the earth*, is blasphemy and superstition. In other words, this Gnostic,

rationalistic spirit eschews here, as at all other points, the mystery of an organic, objective, historical connection between the Church of Christ and the Holy Ghost; and refuses to acknowledge the Holy Ghost, the Divine in Christianity, unless in the form only of an intellectual abstraction, bound to the outward organization and order of the Church in no way whatever. Of the "forgiveness of sins," in the sense of the Creed, where it is made to be a mystery for faith holding only in the bosom of the Holy Catholic Church, the spirit in question knows nothing. How should it? Have we not seen already that it is at war with the whole Creed?

The acts of the Church, we have good reason to say, in the exercise of her proper functions, and through her proper organs, are never just the same thing with what might be done by a mere civil corporation presuming to act in the same way. To think or say so, would, indeed, be to blaspheme the Gospel. As official acts, they have in their own sphere a real force, answering to the character of the sphere, and being in fact the form in which its powers reach forward to their proposed end. Who will deny this? No one, it might seem, but an infidel.

Shall we be afraid then to say, that the official act of the minister, the organ of the Church, in blessing the people, or in pronouncing to the penitent the pardon of their sins, means something more than the same declarations would mean, made by some one else in an unofficial and common way? The minister does not originate the pardon he pronounces; neither does the Church; but the voice of the Church, nevertheless, uttered by him and through him, there where he stands in the objective bosom of this grace, may be and is of immense account for bearing the sense of it with full comfort into the believer's heart. If there are any who cannot see this, sustained as it is by the known relation of thought and word universally, and by analogies to be met with everywhere in common life, they are to be pitied for the narrowness of their thinking, rather than argued with seriously in so plain a case.

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III. We turn our attention next to the doctrine of the Liturgy in regard to *Baptism*. Exception is taken to it, as teach-

ing baptismal regeneration, substituting a mechanical ceremony for the righteousness of faith, and making a mere outward form to stand for the work of the Holy Spirit. Let us see how the matter really stands.

In somewhat bewildering contrast with this, the same service, which is thus charged with making too little of the sinner's justification, has been reproached for making a great deal too much of his original guilt and condemnation. Many at least, at the Synod at Dayton, could hardly trust their ears, when they heard a Professor of Theology, in the Reformed Church, say there, openly, that he, for his part, could not go with the Liturgy, where it speaks of deliverance of our children through baptism "from the power of the Devil;" he did not believe it to be so bad with the children of Christians naturally as that; it was enough to appeal to the common sensibilities of parents (mothers in particular), to prove the contrary! This sounds strange certainly; but it needs only a little reflection to perceive, that it is, after all, only the working out at a new point of the same false spiritualism, which finds it so hard to understand or acknowledge, on the other side, the presence of any real objective grace in baptism.

The Professor of Theology referred to taught in this case, of course, blank Pelagiansism. Here precisely lay the old theological quarrel between Pelagius and St. Augustine. Pelagius, appealing to the common sensibilities of human nature, would not allow that children are born into the world under the curse of original sin, which is the power of the Devil. St. Augustine maintained the contrary, and what is especially noticeable, confounded Pelagius most of all, by appealing to infant baptism, which could have no meaning, he said, except in the light of a deliverance from the curse of sin conceived of in this real way. So, we know, the Church, also, decided against the heresiarch and his followers; and the decision has been echoed by the orthodoxy of the Christian world, from that day down to the present. We content ourselves with quoting now simply the plain words of the Heidelberg Catechism, the symbol this Professor of Theology has bound himself as with the solemnity

of an oath to teach. "By the fall and disobedience of our first parents, Adam and Eve, in Paradise," the Catechism tells us, Question 7, "our nature became so corrupt, that we are all conceived and born in sin." On this then follows the question: "But are we so far depraved, that we are wholly unapt to any good (*ganz und gar untüchtig zu einigem Guten*), and prone to all evil?" to which is thundered forth, as from Mount Sinai, the soul-shaking answer: "Yes; unless we are born again by the Spirit of God." *How* this new birth by the Spirit is brought to pass, is not here of any account; what we have to do with now is simply the witness of the Catechism to the total depravity of infants. It is plain, direct, overwhelming.

And is not this what we are taught no less plainly in the New Testament? "That which is born of the flesh," our Saviour says to Nicodemus (John iii. 6) "is flesh"—that is, mere human nature in its fallen character, which as such cannot enter the kingdom of God, but is hopelessly on the outside of that kingdom, and so under the power of the Devil; only "that which is born of the Spirit, is spirit;" and for this reason it is, that a man must be born again, "born of water and the Spirit," in order that he may have part in this salvation. But why pursue the argument in this way? Must we go about proving at length for elders and deacons, or for the people at large, in the German Reformed Church, that the Scriptures teach the doctrine of Original Sin? The very children in our Sunday-schools have a sounder theology on this subject, than the Divinity Professor, who so exposed himself in regard to it at the Synod in Dayton.

A Pelagian anthropology leads over naturally to a spiritualistic construction of the whole Christian salvation; in which, as there is no organic power of the Devil or kingdom of darkness, for men to be delivered from, so there will be no organic redemption either, no objective, historical order of grace, in the bosom and through the power of which, this salvation is to go forward; but all will be made to resolve itself into workings of God's Spirit that are of a general character, and into

processes of thought and feeling, on the part of men, with no other basis than the relations of God to man in the most common, simply humanitarian view. Is there then no organic redemption needed for men, into the sphere of which they must come first of all, in order that they may have power to become personally righteous, and so be able to work out their salvation with fear and trembling, as knowing it to be God that worketh in them both to will and to do of His own good pleasure? Has the Church been wrong in believing through all ages, that "we must be delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son" (Col. i. 13), not as the end of our personal goodness and piety, but the beginning of it, and the one necessary condition first of all, without which we can make no progress in goodness or piety whatever? Has the Church been wrong in believing, that such change of state, such transplantation from the kingdom of the Devil over into the kingdom of Christ, must in the nature of the case be a Divine act; and that as such a Divine act, it must be something more than any human thought or volition simply, stimulated into action by God's Spirit? Has the Church been wrong in believing, finally, that the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, the sacrament of initiation into the Church, was instituted, not only to signify this truth in a general way, but to seal it as a present actuality for all who are willing to accept the boon thus offered to them in the transaction?

Baptismal regeneration! our evangelical spiritualists are at once ready to exclaim. But we will not allow ourselves to be put out of course in so solemn an argument, by any catchword of this sort addressed to popular prejudice. The Liturgy avoids the ambiguous phrase; and we will do so too; for the word regeneration is made to mean, sometimes one thing, and sometimes another, and it does not come in our way at all at present to discuss these meanings. We are only concerned, that no miserable logomachy of this sort shall be allowed to cheat us out of what the sacrament has been held to be in past ages; God's act, setting apart those who are the subjects of it to His service, and bringing them within the sphere of His grace in

order that they may be saved. We do not ask any one to call this regeneration; it may not suit at all his sense of the term; but we do most earnestly conjure all to hold fast to the thing, call it by what term they may. The question is simply, Doth baptism in any sense save us? That is, does it put us in the way of salvation? Has it anything to do at all with our deliverance from original sin, and our being set down in the new world of righteousness and grace, which has been brought to pass, in the midst of Satan's kingdom all around it, by our Lord Jesus Christ?

For the defence of the Liturgy it will be enough to place the matter now on the lowest ground. Our spiritualists admit that God *may* make baptism the channel of His grace—may cause the thing signified to go along with the outward sign, when He is pleased to do so; only they will not have it that His grace is in any way bound to the ordinance. Will they not admit then also, that the sacrament ought to be so used as to carry with it the benefit it represents; that God designed it to be in this way more than an empty form; and that it is the duty of all, therefore, to desire and expect through it what it thus, by Divine appointment, holds out to expectation? Who will be so bold as to say, in so many words, that baptism means no deliverance whatever from the power of sin, and that it is superstition to come looking for anything of this sort from it? Why then quarrel with the Liturgy for making earnest with the objective force of the sacrament in this view?

"You present this child here," it is said, "and do seek for him deliverance from the power of the Devil, the remission of sin, and the gift of a new and spiritual life by the Holy Ghost, through the Sacrament of Baptism, which Christ hath ordained for the communication of such great grace." Is it not true, that the sacrament has been ordained for that purpose, even if this be not exclusively or necessarily bound to its administration? If not, for what other purpose under heaven was it ordained? And if for this purpose, why should those who come to the ordinance, not come seeking what it holds out in this way to the view of faith? Are they to come seeking

nothing, expecting nothing, believing nothing? Or if otherwise, in the name of all common sense, tell us, O ye Gnostic dreamers, ye zealous contenders against formalities and forms, what then *are* they to seek?

The Liturgy, we allow, however, goes beyond this low view of the mere possibility of grace through the sacrament; it affirms that God, on His part, makes it to be always objectively just what it means. In other words, it teaches the reality of sacramental grace; and sees in it a birth-right title to all the blessings of the new covenant. This does not mean, that it regenerates or converts any one in the modern Methodistic sense of these terms; that it saves people by magic; or that it makes their final salvation sure in any way. Like Esau's birthright, it may be neglected, despised, parted with for a mess of pottage. But all this does not touch the question of its intrinsic value, in its own order; as being a real Divine gift and power of Sonship, nevertheless, in the family of God, for which all the treasures of the earth should be counted a poor and mean exchange.

On this subject of baptismal grace, then, we will enter into no compromise with the anti-liturgical theology we have now in hand. In seeking to make the Liturgy wrong, it has only shown itself wrong; and the more its errors are probed, the more are they found to be indeed, "wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores." Starting with Pelagianism on one side, it lands us swiftly in downright Rationalism on the other. "It is impossible," says the distinguished French Reformed divine, Pressense, in a late article, "to establish the necessity of infant baptism, except upon the ground that baptism imparts a special grace." We are most decidedly of the same opinion; and for this reason we denounce this theology as in reality, whatever it may be in profession, hostile to infant baptism, and unfriendly, therefore, to the whole idea of educational religion as this has been based upon it in the Reformed Church from the beginning. Without the conception of baptismal grace going along with the baptism of infants, there can be no room properly for confirmation; and the catechetical training which

is employed to prepare the way for this, may easily come then to seem a hinderance rather than a help, to the true conversion of the young to God. Then it will be well, if baptism fall not into general contempt, and so be brought to sink finally more and more into neglect altogether. To what a pass things have already come in this respect throughout our country, by reason of the baptistic spirit which is among us, and the general theological tendency we are now considering, we will not now take time to decide. Those who have eyes to see, can see for themselves.

IV. Office for the *Holy Communion*. The central character of this service, ruling as it ought to do the whole Order of worship to which it belongs, must make it of course specially objectionable to the anti-liturgical spirit with which we are now dealing.

Particular fault has sometimes been found with the consecratory prayer in the service, as teaching a real union between Christ and the elements representing His body and blood, differing altogether from the proper Reformed doctrine on this mysterious subject. A certain Doctor of Divinity went so far at Dayton as to say, that it amounted in full to the Roman Catholic dogma of transubstantiation. But in this the Doctor of Divinity was egregiously mistaken, as in many things besides. The doctrine of the Liturgy in that prayer is not Popish, and not Lutheran, but strictly Reformed. Not to be sure Reformed in the modern Puritan sense, in which too plainly this unliturgical spirit finds its familiar home; but Reformed in the old Calvinistic sense, as this entered into the symbols of the Reformed Church generally in the sixteenth century.

It is not true that this proper Reformed doctrine made the Lord's Supper to be only a commemorative ordinance, calling to mind the fact of His death. It made it to be this; but it made it to be also the medium of a real mystical communion with this glorified life. It saw in it, not a sign only, but a sacrament; the conjunction of visible elements with the invisible represented by them, in such sort that the presence of the one could be said to involve the presence also of the other—not

locally of course, but dynamically and with full virtue and effect—through the wonder-working power of the Holy Ghost. This we have abundantly shown years ago in our tract against Dr. Hodge, entitled, “The Doctrine of the Reformed Church on the Presence of Christ in the Lord’s Supper;” an argument, which no one has ever yet pretended to meet, and whose historical force at least never can be overthrown; however convenient it may be for Puritanic divinity to go on repeating its traditionary song on this subject, as though history had nothing do with the matter whatever.

Now it is this old Reformed doctrine, we affirm, and no other, which is involved in the consecratory prayer of the Liturgy. Any one at all familiar with the Calvinistic terminology in regard to it, can see that it is faithfully followed at every point. It would be hard, indeed, to give the doctrine more succinctly or exactly in the same compass. God is called upon to “send down the powerful benediction of His Holy Spirit” upon the elements, “that being set apart now from a common to a sacred and mystical use, they may exhibit and represent”—these being the very terms made use of by Calvin to distinguish the Reformed doctrine from the Lutheran; may *exhibit* and *represent* “to us with true effect”—that is, not corporeally, and yet not simply in sign or shadow either, but with the energy of actual presence—“the Body and Blood of His Son, Jesus Christ; so that in the use of them”—mark again the distinction; not in the elements themselves outwardly considered, but in the use of them, that is, in the sacramental transaction, “we may be made, through the power of the Holy Ghost”—again the Calvinistic or Reformed qualification—“to partake really and truly of His blessed life, whereby only we can be saved from death, and raised to immortality at the last day.”

In the face of all this, what are we to think of a Doctor of Divinity, who could stand up and say, that the Liturgy in this prayer teaches the doctrine of transubstantiation?

What are we to think of the same Doctor of Divinity, when we find him thrumming on the expression, “this memorial of

the blessed sacrifice of Thy Son," in the next following prayer; as though it said *memorial sacrifice*, and meant all that is held offensive in the Roman Catholic so called sacrifice of the mass! Alas, alas, for the Liturgy, in the hands of theological criticism so utterly untheological as this!

A truce, however, to these quibbles about particular terms. The real controversy here is with the Communion service as a whole; and it turns upon the sacramental doctrine which underlies it throughout, and which in this way conditions the universal sense of the Liturgy. This anti-liturgical theology, not centering in the Incarnation, not dwelling in the bosom of the Creed, having no sense for objective historical Christianity, and no sense for the Church, can have at the same time of course no sense for the sacramental in its true form. For what is a sacrament? The visible exhibition of an invisible grace—a mystery in this view, where the visible and invisible are brought together, and held together, not simply in man's thought, but in God's power, by a bond holding beyond nature altogether in the supernatural order of grace. Does Puritanism believe this? Not at all. It will know no sacrament, save in the intelligible form of a sign, which simply represents and calls to mind what God does for men spiritually, and on the outside of the sacrament altogether. We have just seen what becomes of the Sacrament of Baptism in the hands of this spiritualistic scheme. And now it is only what might be expected, to find it bent on taking away our Lord from us after the same fashion, in the Holy Eucharist.

The Liturgy stands as a protest and defence against this sacrilege. It gives us the true Reformed view of Christ's presence in the Lord's Supper, in a form answering at the same time to the faith and worship of the Primitive Church. It teaches, that the Lord's Supper is more than an outward sign, and more than a mere calling to mind of our Saviour's death as something past and gone. It teaches, that the value of Christ's sacrifice never dies, but is perennially continued in the power of His life. It teaches, that the outward side of the sacrament is mystically bound by the Holy Ghost to its inward

invisible side; not fancifully, but really and truly; so that the undying power of Christ's life and sacrifice are there, in the transaction, for all who take part in it with faith. It teaches, that it is our duty to appropriate this grace, and to bring it before God (the "memorial of the blessed sacrifice of His Son"), as the only ground of our trust and confidence in His presence. All this the Liturgy teaches. Who will say that it wrongs, in doing so, the sacramental doctrine of the Reformed Church? Are we then to have no sacraments? Must we plunge into the full abyss of Rationalism?

• We now stop. Our general task is done. Enough has been said, to show how things stand between the New Liturgy and its theological opposers. We are willing to submit the case to the common intelligence of our churches. Even the West must yet come, we think, to see eye to eye here with the East. To the people at large we say: Look now on this picture, and now on that; and judge ye for your own selves, which of these theological schemes may be safest and best for the German Reformed Church to take to her bosom at the present time.