

THE ARTICLES OF THE APOSTLES' CREED.

X. "A HOLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH."

Sanctam ecclesiam catholicam.	A holy Christian (christliche)
Sanctorum communionem. Re-	Church, the Communion of Saints,
missionem peccatorum. Carnis	Forgiveness of sins, Resurrection
resurrectionem et vitam æternam.	of the flesh and an eternal life.
Amen.	Amen.

Rom.: ἁγίαν ἐκκλησίαν, ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν, σαρκὸς ἀνάστασιν.¹ *Aqu.*: Sanctam ecclesiam, remissionem peccatorum, hujus carnis resurrectionem. *Afric.*: Remissionem peccatorum, carnis resurrectionem et vitam æternam per sanctam ecclesiam.² *Jerus.*: καὶ εἰς ἐν βάπτισμα μετανοίας εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν καὶ εἰς μίαν ἅγιαν καθολικὴν ἐκκλησίαν καὶ εἰς σαρκὸς ἀνάστασιν καὶ εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον. *Antioch.* (Fragment in Chrysos-tom): καὶ εἰς ἁμαρτιῶν ἄφεσιν καὶ εἰς νεκρῶν ἀνάστασιν καὶ εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον.

These last Articles must be taken all together in order to bring into view the great variety of forms in the Creeds that are compared. They also belong to one another inas-much as the relation of the objects of faith here enumerated to the Faith itself differs from the personal relationship of the believer to God the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost. It is not well to speak, as we commonly do, without any difference in the mode of expression, of belief in Christ and belief in "the forgiveness of sins" or in "eter-nal life." There is no ambiguity in the older baptismal confession which has been retained unchanged in substance in the Roman Creed. We can trace back the parts of the

¹ Marcellus also added thereto *ζωὴν αἰώνιον*, an addition widely circulated in the East. It is also found in several Western creeds which in other respects are almost identical with the Roman, as with the addition found in that of Ravenna (Hahn, p. 25).

² So according to Fulgentius of Ruspe (Caspari, II. 257), and with an equiva-lent variation in the probably authentic Augustinian sermon 215 (Caspari, II. 245, 265, 271). But already Cyprian in *Epist.* 69, 7 gives the baptismal question which fairly well expresses the thought: "credis in remissionem peccatorum et vitam æternam per sanctam ecclesiam?" And to the same effect in *Epist.* 70, 2, only he here reverses the order of the two first clauses.

third Article which are peculiar to it to the beginning of the second century, to the times before Marcion. It lays stress on the difference of the relation by placing the preposition before the three Subjects of the Godhead as objects of faith, and by dropping it before the other articles of faith which follow. By this we are to understand that which we can also express to a certain extent in the translation: "I believe in God, in Christ, in the Holy Ghost," and "I believe a holy Church, Forgiveness of sins, Resurrection of the flesh." The more careful commentators have brought out this difference clearly and in many ways.¹ And if now and then one of the Fathers uses the dative *ecclesiae*² instead of the accusative *ecclesiam* the context shows that it does not in the least mean that the obedience of faith is to be rendered as a duty to the Church, which at the same time presents the truth and enforces it. It is only a somewhat unskilful attempt to bring out more clearly to the ear the difference which was already perceptible in the oldest forms of the Creed between the objects of faith mentioned before and those which followed after, and to say that faith in the Church was not the same as faith in the Triune God. The Church was not to be looked upon as the author of salvation and the creator of the truth, but to be trusted in as a faithful witness to the truth which

¹ So Rufinus, c. 36, 39. Faustus of Riez, in the second homily (Caspari *Anecdota*, p. 338, cf. p. 329 f.), and *de spir. s.* 1, 2 (Engelbrecht, p. 103, etc.) partly in connection with Augustine's sharp distinction between *credere deum*, *in deum*, and *deo*. Cf. Caspari, I. 226, etc. Also the Roman Catechism, § 145, 163, still holds strictly to this distinction.

² So Nicetas, according to the probably true reading (Caspari, *Anecdota*, p. 355 n. 17). But no other statements on the Church follow which prove as such that according to her essential constituents she must be invisible, and therefore an object of faith. It cannot therefore be meant otherwise than as in p. 350: *Sequitur ut credas dominicæ passioni et passum confitearis Christum*. In the *Explanatio symboli*, dating probably from Ambrose (Caspari, II. 55, 57; IV. 218 n. 125, p. 221 n. 194), the tradition wavers between *ecclesiam*, *ecclesie in ecclesiam*, without any apparently intentional distinction being drawn between them in the address.

was to be held with her. But this exceptional alteration in the confession is not to be found in form or in meaning in the original confession and in the common interpretation of the old Church.

If faith is a steadfast waiting for things hoped for and a proving of things not seen (Heb. xi. 1), then the thought of primitive Christianity expressed in the words: "I believe a Holy Church" was very important. For in her being and in her essential character the Church is invisible, however visible and tangible her embodiments and her manifold modes of appearing may be. Without the indwelling Holy Spirit, whom we cannot see, she would be a corpse; without the Christ who is ascended up into heaven she would only be a trunk; and again without the risen Christ as the corner and the keystone on which her faithful ones like Him build themselves up as living stones, she would be a house of cards. Without those generations of the faithful, who have gone before, the Church at any one moment, even without taking into account the divisions and the equally unnatural alliances existing at the time, would be but a fragment. And not only would she be this, but she is in fact. I hold the "holy Church" only in the hope that one day all will be reunited, who belong to one another but are now separated, by time and place, by the imperfection of human knowledge and by death; and that all the children of God, who have ever lived, perfected and reunited, will one day appear that which Christ would have them to be. Until the fulfilment of this hope the Church is a mystery which I either believe or, otherwise, do not possess. No very lengthy proof is needed to show that such were the thoughts of Christ and His Apostles, for it is only to words of Christ and his Apostles that I have referred incidentally.

The confession of "the holy Church" would not be altered by the addition of the attribute "Catholic." We

cannot say when it first found its place in the Creed of every single church. While the African Church did not yet accept it in the sixth century we find it already in the Western Creeds of the fourth century which otherwise agree in every respect with the Roman.¹ It seems to have been already contained in the majority of the Eastern Creeds in yet earlier times. According to its original meaning the word "Catholic" reminds us only of an attribute of the Church which contributes essentially to make her an object of faith. The oldest Christian author in whose writings we find the words "Catholic Church" calls united Christendom by that name in contrast to single communities.² While the members of the latter live together in one town, gather together in one place for Divine worship, are united under one bishop with priests and deacons, the Catholic Church is wherever Christ and faith in Christ are to be found. The one Bishop and Shepherd of the Catholic Church is, according to Ignatius, Christ or God Himself; the Apostles form His presbytery. Although he does not really say that the saints of the Old Testament are members of the Church, still he reckons them as forming part of that company of people whom God through Christ has saved and gathered together. Also they are already in anticipation disciples of Jesus and filled with His Spirit, and since then they have been put into possession of salvation through Christ. Even the angelic world has part in this community in that they "believe in the blood of Christ."³ While Ignatius looks upon each separate community and its whole organization as a carnal thing because the persons, places of assembly, transactions and modes of intercourse in which it exists, are earthly and

¹ So in the *Explanation of the Creed* (II. 134), attributed to the time between 340-360 in Caspari, II. 168.

² Ign. *Smyrn.* 8; cf. Polycarp's prayer (*Martyr. Polyc.* c. 8, also c. 5), and my *Ignatius*, p. 315 f., 428 ff., 439 f.

³ *Philad.* 5, 9; *Magn.* 8, 9. On the angelic world, *Smyrn.* 6.

visible, the universal Church is to him something essentially invisible and spiritual. Her Bishop, her presbyters, her chief members, her bond of unity belong to the invisible world, and it is only in officially organized separate communities, confined by locality, that she has a visible earthly embodiment.

Another use of the words "Catholic Church" developed itself in the second century side by side with this original one, which has never been completely discarded. The bearers of the name of Christian, who on account of their peculiar doctrines separated themselves from, or were shut out of, the Church, were therefore not recognised by the majority, who opposed them, as Christians or as members of the Catholic Church, while they regarded themselves as Christians and their separated communities as parts of the "holy Church." Thus arose the opposition of the one great Catholic Church and the smaller heretical communities which nevertheless called themselves Churches also, and were even so called occasionally by their opponents. Thus "Catholic" became a badge of the orthodox Confession. It is remarkable that already in the first instance of this use of the word "Catholic" which we can trace back in literature, it is a single local community that is so called. When we think of the meaning of the word and of the original use of the term, it seems an absolute contradiction in terms to speak of the Bishop of the Catholic Church of Smyrna.¹ It was not in the nature of things that this unfortunate mode of speech should have had any influence worth mentioning on the insertion of "holy Church" into the Creed. For it cannot be an article of faith to believe the palpable fact that the local communities, whose Bishops were a Polycarp or an Augustine, possessed the same confession as the large Christian communities of other towns and lands, and were

¹ In the reports of the community in Smyrna, of the year 155, about Polycarp's martyrdom, c. 16; cf. the greeting in the superscription and c. 19.

in communion with them, while the same did not hold good of the followers of a Marcion or an Arius.

As an attribute of the Church the word "Catholic" in the Creed can only bear its original meaning. The history of its interpretation justifies this view. Those theologians who had not got the word in their Creed just as often as those who had it in their Creed point the heretical communities in order to warn against them, and to assert that the holy Church which is an object of faith is not to be found in them.¹ And on the other hand those who possessed it as a constituent part of the Creed and as a subject for exposition, explain the word just as distinctly of the universality of the Church overleaping all the bounds of time and space, as the others who only used it of their own accord for the purpose of explanation. A Nicetas of Romatiana confesses, according to his Creed, "a holy catholic Church," and then adds immediately: "What is the Church but the assembly of the saints? All from the very beginning of the world, be they Patriarchs such as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, or Prophets, or Martyrs, or other righteous men who have been, who are, who shall be, are *one* Church because they, sanctified by *one* faith and *one* conversation, sealed by *one* Spirit, are one body whose head is Christ, as it is written. I say even more, also the angels and all the heavenly powers and dominions are included in the covenant of this *one* Church."² It cannot be denied that even long before the times of a Nicetas or an Augustine this truly universal Church which is the object of our faith had become identified in an inadmissible manner with the Church on earth of that period together with her bishops and constitutions. But of this the word "Catholic,"

¹ Augustine, *Sermo* 215, 9; *liber de fide et symbolo*, § 21; *de symbolo ad catechumenos*, § 13 (Bass, viii. 1607), Rufin. c. 39.

² Caspari, *Anecdota*, p. 356. We find the same thought in Augustine, *Enchiridion ad Laurentium*, 56-64 (§ 15, 16) and elsewhere. He defines the idea in a very popular but less far-reaching way in *Sermo* 213, 6.

of which even theologians often appear to have a fear as of ghosts, is innocent. On the contrary, it forces him who still believes that a baptism properly administered can never be an empty ceremony, to raise his eyes beyond the bounds of his own Confession and also beyond the office-bearers, the ordinances, and the separations of his own peculiar Church to that universal Church which is *sanctorum omnium congregatio*.¹ That false identification of the empirical Church with the true Church can be furthest traced back in the African Church, which did not call the Church "Catholic" in her Creed. On the other hand it was there also that the doubtful form, not without danger, was given to the Article, according to which "the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection and eternal life" were to be obtained through the mediation of "the holy Church." Even this formula allows of a really Christian interpretation. The Christian cannot say simply, as Luther does in his Catechism, that the Holy Ghost forgives him and all the faithful all their sins in that Christendom which He has gathered together, enlightened and sanctified. For it is also true that by the service of the Church and her means of grace each individual is made partaker of the gifts of salvation. But still it is well that the African formula did not spread and maintain itself in the Church, for it lends itself very easily to a false view, and it was probably from a false view that it arose in the beginning.

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¹ This is Nicetas' exact expression. (See the former note; cf. Hilary on Psalm 118 (119). *Litæra Samech*, § 6 (ed. Zingerle, p. 490, 14), "congregatio sancta" (v. l. sanctorum).